THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN IRREGULAR WAR:

FROM PRACTICE TO POLICY, AND BACK AGAIN

by

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ABSTRACT

America has a lengthy history with irregular warfare. The nation was born of an insurgency and remained committed to such conflict over the centuries, from the American Revolution in the eighteenth century, the Indian Wars in the nineteenth century, the Philippines in the twentieth century, and Iraq and Afghanistan in the twentieth-first century. Although the U.S. has learned a great deal from centuries of fighting irregular war, the lessons were continuously learned and forgotten, indicating America's distaste of such conflict. Yet, as America continues to fight irregular wars, doctrine and policy have taken shape. However, whereas doctrine and policy may exist, our practices remain very similar to the past, often involving inconsistent and ad hoc measures. Yet, new methodology emerged which takes "best practices" from centuries of irregular war. This methodology calls for a fundamental change in how the U.S. approaches irregular war, illustrating the need to focus on local level instability and conflict drivers. Further, this methodology not only can be employed in the field of conflict, but also can help mitigate conflict before it becomes war. In order to learn from America's history in irregular war, and embrace methodology based on historical "best practices," America must move from merely changing its policy to changing how it practices irregular conflict.

Dedicated to my wife, Hamida Alexander,

for enduring my days and nights away while she

tirelessly performed the bulk of the parenting.

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INTRODUCTION

Framing the Challenges of Irregular Conflict

> While these units function as guerrillas, they may be compared to innumerable gnats, which, by biting a giant both in front and in the rear, ultimately exhaust him. They make themselves as unendurable as a group of cruel and hateful devils, and as they grow and attain gigantic proportions, they will find their victim is not only exhausted but practically perishing.—Mao Tse-tung, 1937

America has a long history with irregular war with historical involvement in dozens of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies. America's very existence is rooted in insurgency warfare and this form of conflict has never completely disappeared throughout America's two and a half centuries-long history, seeing only ebbs in prominence and national attention. The American people's first national experience with insurgency and counterinsurgency was the American Revolution as a struggle for independence from the colonial hegemony of the British Empire. The American war for independence was in essence a political war fought amongst the people for deeply political reasons—making it an archetypical insurgency by current American standards.[1] Yet, this was merely one American experience dealing with insurgency and counterinsurgency, contemporarily referred to as irregular warfare. As we will see,

[1] The current military doctrine, FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency states: "Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate. Insurgents use all available tools—political (including diplomatic), informational (including appeals to religious, ethnic, or ideological beliefs), military, and economic—to overthrow the existing authority. This authority may be an established government or an interim governing body. Counterinsurgents, in turn, use all instruments of national power to sustain the established or emerging government and reduce the likelihood of another crisis emerging." See Department of the Army, *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 2009).

America's experience in this form of conflict, whether as insurgents or counterinsurgents, is lengthy and complex.

Aside from America's formative years rooted in insurgency, America also has a lengthy history in which the United States was a primary actor in counterinsurgency warfare. In fact, America's history as being the counterinsurgent force is more extensive than often acknowledged. By modern definition, counterinsurgency is essentially the antithesis of insurgency warfare, being as deeply political and nuanced as the insurgencies they seek to counter. To illustrate these many nuances, the U.S. Army describes the population-based intricacies of counterinsurgency:

> At its heart, counterinsurgency is an armed struggle for the support of the population. This support can be achieved or lost through information engagement, strong representative government, access to goods and services, fear, or violence. This armed struggle also involves eliminating insurgents who threaten the safety and security of the population. However, military units alone cannot defeat an insurgency. Most of the work involves discovering and solving the population's underlying issues, that is, the root causes of their dissatisfaction with the current arrangement of political power. Dealing with diverse issues such as land reform, underemployment, oppressive leadership, or ethnical tensions places a premium on tactical leaders who can not only close with the enemy, but also negotiate agreements, operate with nonmilitary agencies and other nations, restore basic services, speak the native (a foreign) language, orchestrate political deals, and get "the word" on the street.[2]

Among the most salient points this paragraph highlights is that insurgency and counterinsurgency (i.e., the armed struggle between the two) are extraordinarily complex and the tactics and strategies are timeless. In short, although these conflicts have become more complex and the tactics and strategies more sophisticated, the concept itself is nothing new.

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[2] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24.2, Tactics in Counterinsurgency* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 2009). ix.

Despite new doctrine, policy, and theory, governments and those competing for or against the government in power have always been concerned with gaining popular support and evoking group sentiments within the target population, regardless of methods utilized to win or defeat peoples. A clear distinction should be made, however, that whereas the concept of population-based irregular war is timeless, the tactics and strategies have evolved substantially. Over the past few decades, insurgencies have evolved from merely guerrilla warfare, devoid of a political base, to that of sophisticated political warfare utilizing violence as well as using the leverage of public support as the key tools in winning power.

The U.S. Army manual goes on to point out a particularly salient issue in political warfare that insurgencies and counterinsurgencies focus the majority of their attention on the population, rather than merely the enemy. Stated more formally, these types of conflicts are more frequently "population-centric" rather than merely "enemy-centric." For the successful insurgent or counterinsurgent, simply killing the enemy cannot be the top priority. Popular support must be drained from the enemy. This is of course what makes such forms of warfare deeply political. To illustrate, "enemy-centric" conflicts tend to be more conventional conflicts, such as WWII where population sentiment was dealt with as a byproduct of larger conventional military efforts. In other words, soldiers viewed population sentiment as relatively irrelevant while undertaking the task of fighting major battles. These important points—that irregular war is primarily about gaining political support and that such warfare tends to be focused on the population—set irregular war apart from conventional war.

Irregular warfare, such as counterinsurgency and insurgency, is not a rarity in either contemporary or historical periods of conflict. Historically, irregular conflict is far more statistically prominent when compared to conventional forms of conflict. Despite the overwhelming amount of attention on conventional wars, where armies fight through traditional forms of combat (e.g., battle for air superiority, centralized command and control, uniformed armies fighting for terrain, large naval sea battles, etc.), conventional war has not been predominant statistically since formal tracking began. Over the previous two and a half centuries, "small wars" have been at least as important, if not more so, than well-known larger conventional wars (e.g., examples of conventional war include the American Civil War and the Great World Wars). What should be clear is that irregular war has been and will likely remain a vital part of the American war experience.

Frequency and Relevance of Irregular Conflict:

The American Perspective

The United States has engaged frequently in irregular conflict. Studies of conflict analysis that quantify the numbers of conventional versus nonconventional wars highlight that counterinsurgency and insurgency warfare is in fact much more "typical" than widely-known larger conventional wars. Many conflict scholars point out that over the past sixty years, irregular warfare—including insurgency and counterinsurgency—has actually become the dominant form of war, not only in terms of frequency but also in terms of long-range political relevance and consequence. Conflict scholars highlight: "Within the 464 conflicts recorded on the *Correlates of War* database since 1815, we can

identify 385 in which a state was fighting a non-state actor."[3] By definition, irregular warfare is characterized by states fighting nonstate entities. Thus, statistically, conventional wars (i.e., conflict predominantly being state on state) reflect approximately only one-quarter of global conflicts since 1815.

America has followed a similar pattern as the global community, engaging more frequently in irregular conflict. As counterinsurgents, the U.S. has fought, to varying degrees of success, a wide array of such conflicts, including wars against Native Americans, Mexican guerrillas, Islamist insurgents, and even our own insurgents—such as during the Whiskey Rebellion and again during the Civil War against secessionist guerrillas (e.g., "Mosby's Rangers"). As the insurgents and guerrillas, both sanctioned and otherwise, Americans have fought against the British, Native Americans, and our own—to name only a few. Further, we have also assisted on frequent occasion foreign counterinsurgents and insurgents via Special Forces (i.e., Foreign Internal Defense or FID) and similar classified and covert operations. Thus, America is no stranger to irregular conflict.

Applicability and Effectiveness of Irregular Conflict

The phenomenon of irregular war occurs for a primary overarching reason—that given the right environment and circumstances, irregular war affords the best chance of success when a weaker foe comes into armed conflict with a more conventionally powerful adversary. To illustrate, U.S. military doctrine states:

> The contest of internal war is not "fair"; many of the "rules" favor insurgents. That is why insurgency has been a common approach used by the weak against

[3] Sebastian Gorka and David Kilcullen, "The Actor-Centric Theory of War," in *Joint Forces Quarterly* 60 (2011): 17.

> the strong. At the beginning of a conflict, insurgents typically hold the strategic initiative. Though they may resort to violence because of regime changes or government actions, insurgents generally initiate the conflict. Clever insurgents strive to disguise their intentions. When these insurgents are successful at such deception, potential counterinsurgents are at a disadvantage. A coordinated reaction requires political and military leaders to recognize that an insurgency exists and to determine its makeup and characteristics. While the government prepares to respond, the insurgents gain strength and foster increasing disruption throughout the state or region. The government normally has an initial advantage in resources; however, that edge is counterbalanced by the requirement to maintain order and protect the population and critical resources. Insurgents succeed by sowing chaos and disorder anywhere; the government fails unless it maintains a degree of order everywhere.[4]

As illustrated in the previous paragraph, paradoxically, a well-organized and determined insurgency has several distinct advantages when confronting a conventionally superior opponent. Equally important for the counterinsurgent, therefore, is a keen understanding of the population as the knowledge of the human scene now becomes the determining "terrain" for achieving victory. Physical terrain is of distant importance following human terrain.

As highlighted, the frequency of such conflict trending toward irregular conflict is not the result of a mere accident of fate or without reason and thought. Rather, this trend is reflective of a deeper change in overall strategy by state and nonstate conflict actors. Both state and nonstate actors now realize that they need not meet in battle conducted according to historical conventions —such as traditional "force on force" in open battlefields. Further, the insurgents need not have the most advanced fleet of naval ships or stealth fighters. Such weaponry and technology are expensive, time consuming to acquire and be trained on, and outright unachievable for almost all insurgents. Of most importance, however, are also unnecessary in order to win in insurgent warfare.

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[4] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-2.

Therefore, armed with the knowledge of contemporary case studies and evolving literature, innovative and sophisticated approaches to irregular conflict continue to emerge.

With the old adages of conventional conflict thrown aside often in favor of irregular approaches to war, the focus has shifted to winning via irregular means against often conventionally superior adversaries. To illustrate, despite common convention, frequently a successful insurgent seeks to turn the opponent's "strengths" against their adversary, while simultaneously attempting to turn their own "weaknesses" into strengths. Although a nuanced concept like something from the pages of Sun Tzu, it is a commonly held principle among historical and contemporary insurgents. Translated into practical applicability, it simply says to turn large powerful armies into slow, reactive, and confused organizations while maintaining the advantage of surprise and deceit. Regarding technology, it seeks to bait the counterinsurgents into overreacting to insurgent attacks, ultimately alienating them from the human terrain and resulting in the shift of popular support to the insurgents. As a starting point, the insurgent can accomplish his strategy only by "winning" the population, perhaps slowly at first but consistently over time. Ultimately there are two choices in how this is accomplished: the utilization of terror or other forms of coercion (often referred to as the "kinetic" approach, using harsh methods), or persuading the population to join their effort, often performed by building rapport and distributing propaganda (nonkinetic approach, by establishing trust and kinship with the population). Similarly, the counterinsurgent force utilizes similar approaches and choices, essentially attempting to outperform the insurgents at this game, utilizing a mixture of kinetic and nonkinetic approaches.

The Value of "Human Terrain"

As mentioned, "human terrain" is the critical terrain in insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare. As often attributed to the highly successful Chinese insurgent leader, Mao Tse-tung, the population becomes the battlefield that must be captured. In Mao's case, he spared no expense in building rapport with the population, illustrated by his dictate to "…aid the popular masses…help them to gather the harvest or cultivate their lands and send our army doctors to prevent their epidemics or treat the peoples' ailments…hold joint entertainment sessions for the soldiers and the people…smooth over any feelings of alienation between the army and the people."[5] This approach is in stark contrast to conventional thinking of war which focuses on capturing and holding physical terrain. In conventional conflict, the population is merely a single ancillary factor when capturing physical terrain and receives relatively little attention. In contrast, within the doctrine and common practice of irregular conflict, physical terrain can be seen as a negative factor if the captured physical terrain serves only to extend the reach of counterinsurgent forces beyond their means to properly defend themselves, the captured terrain, and the population. This is further pronounced in hostile space which is influenced by the opposition, the very type an insurgency seeks to expand with the goal of captured terrain serving as new points of attack and alienation between the population and the counterinsurgents. To illustrate, U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine writes:

> …maintaining security in an unstable environment requires vast resources, whether host nation, U.S., or multinational. In contrast, a small number of highly motivated insurgents with simple weapons, good operations security, and even limited mobility can undermine security over a large area. Thus, successful COIN

[5] Stuart Schram and Mao Tse-Tung, *Basic Tactics* (New York: Praeger, 1961) 134.

> operations often require a high ratio of security forces to the protected population.[6]

To further illustrate the value of human terrain, in modern counterinsurgency doctrine the "human terrain" becomes the focus in an attempt to willingly "capture," or at the very least to influence the population into joining their side of the conflict. Ordinarily, both sides compete for the human terrain, be it through nonviolent persuasion or forcible coercion. Once a side captures or influences the population, the opposing side becomes significantly weakened and their legitimacy undermined. This reduced capability is due to the reduced capability to easily conduct offensive or defensive operations –that is, kinetic operations to kill and capture adversaries, now protected by the local population. Further examples of reduced capability through the loss of popular support may often include diminished intelligence from the population on the adversary's operations, an inability to travel without fear of attack, difficulty maintaining supply lines, and general population hostility affecting overall operations in unforeseen ways. U.S. Army doctrine discusses the importance of such "human terrain" support for both insurgents and counterinsurgents, stating:

> …insurgents rely on friendly elements within the population to provide supplies and intelligence…Insurgent camps are also chosen with a view toward easy access to the target population, access to a friendly or neutral border, prepared escape routes, and good observation of counterinsurgency force approach routes…Like COIN [counterinsurgency] in urban areas, rural counterinsurgency operations must focus on both locating and killing the guerrilla and on severing the supportive element of the population, such as the mass base and auxiliary, from providing supplies and intelligence.[7]

These many small but significant shifts in approaches to conflict add up to significant theoretical, doctrinal, and operational changes. With common conventional

[6] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24*, 1-2.
[7] Department of the Army, *FM 3-24.2*, 3-12.

concepts of war replaced by new structures and goals of irregular war, the rules of war changed holistically. The more common understanding of Clausewitzian theory of war involving overwhelming force application, attrition of the opposition, and superior fire and maneuver do not reign supreme in irregular warfare. Yet, a distinctly different yet equally important argument by Clausewitz became prominent in irregular war, which asserts that "War is a continuation of 'policy'—or of 'politics'—by other means."[8] This concept, while originally written as part of his study on conventional war, takes on new undertones in irregular conflict. In irregular conflict, politics is the foundation of the conflict; not only does irregular conflict perpetuate politics in a more violent framework—in irregular war often politics is the origin of the conflict—but also political change serves as the end-game. It is politics that are the conflict-driving grievances, that cause populations to support (or become) militants, that give rise to new insurgent leaders, and that provide the rallying cry of the insurgent and counterinsurgent. In irregular war, politics are of paramount importance.

Why Insurgency?

As in most forms of conflict, comparative advantages matter. The side with the most strategic and tactical advantages is usually the victor. Such advantages might include, but not be limited to, the greatest firepower, the stealthiest planes, the largest armies, the strongest armor, the most disciplined and trained units, and so on. But paradoxically irregular warfare's focus is distinctly different from that of conventional warfare. The normal advantages in conventional war can be turned on their head. While

[8] Christopher Bassford, "Clausewitz and His Works," in *The Clausewitz Homepage*, www.clausewitz.com (last accessed March 15, 2011).

advanced technology, large and powerful armies, and overwhelming concentrated firepower matter even in irregular warfare, they are not the primary focus. The insurgent quickly learns that their forces have little chance of achieving success against a more powerful and established counterinsurgency force. In fact, insurgencies are often forced into guerrilla warfare due to their distinct conventional disadvantages (e.g., lack of conventional military power) that would normally prove fatal when matched in conventional battle. When this is the case, insurgents often turn to irregular conflict for the specific reason of leveraging their irregular advantages against their stronger adversary. The way in which this irregular war is conducted is what turns conventional notions of strength on its head.

In guerrilla warfare, a subset of irregular conflict, guerrilla fighting is often pursued as a means for the insurgency to fight covertly as well as to arm themselves with weaponry and supplies. A few common guerrilla tactics include ambushes, assassinations, propaganda, and other methods of tactical and larger strategic utilization of key terrain and population support. The concept behind this form of warfare is that it utilizes conventional strengths as weaknesses. To illustrate, if a large army knows little about the area and population which it occupies, it is easy for local insurgents to turn the population against the "occupiers," painting them as exploiting the country and the people. Such an approach is the norm for insurgent clandestine propaganda. To further these gains, the insurgent may attack from population centers, hoping for an overreaction by the counterinsurgent force leading to civilian casualties. In turn, this further alienates the counterinsurgents from the population and often lends additional support to the insurgents. The overall insurgent methodology seeks to use the adversary's strength and

overwhelming force to benefit the insurgents. These small "victories" (i.e., counterinsurgency mistakes) amount to strategic success through slow attrition and growing popular support for the insurgents. Once a critical mass of the population turns against the counterinsurgents, it becomes enormously costly in all forms of resources to maintain operations. As one author highlights, "Conceptually, it was similar to the technique of a judo wrestler who throws his opponent using not his own strength but the gross weight and power of his adversary."[9] It is also noteworthy that these rules of irregular conflict apply to both sides. The counterinsurgents are seeking many of the same strategic goals the insurgents are seeking, and thus similar methods are used, albeit usually with the use of far greater resources.

As noted, the focus in irregular conflict is the population, political ideology, local grievances, and the exploitation of social and military weaknesses in the adversary. But to win in any conflict there must be a military victory to accompany political victory. But this is no small task if an insurgency begins from little in terms of leadership, fighters, infrastructure, and logistics. Such victory requires phases of growth, moving from small units of untrained and ill-equipped fighters, to battle-tested and field-hardened guerrillas and militants with a strong sense of commitment to the cause (i.e., the political reason for the insurgency). Thus, an insurgent victory requires skilled fighters, nuanced knowledge of irregular tactics and strategy, and a strong determination for the overall cause. In other words, this is a deeply complex form of war in the establishment phase, not just for purposes of strategic politics, but also at the tactical level of the individual fighters, small unit leaders, and grass-roots population support.

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[9] John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 23.

To illustrate these complexities, let us examine a common scenario in irregular warfare. Over the past century most developed nations have been overwhelmingly focused on technology-driven conventional war. While perhaps understandable given common strategic design and interests, such technology assets in small wars can quickly shift into a disadvantage. This occurs for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, ease of technology can "soften" conventional soldiers making them less accustomed to rigorous field craft (e.g., mountain warfare). Such an overreliance on technology also backfires when it fails, and technology is often highly specialized and not flexible enough to be of value in irregular conflicts environments, thus often leading to undesirable results. Conversely, a guerrilla in rural environments spends days and nights in austere environments, including soggy fields or in frozen mountain caves, honing small unit guerrilla tactics and living off the land and with the support of local civilians. But most importantly, by living amongst the people, the insurgent cultivates supportive relationships with local villagers and tribesmen, providing the insurgent with important information the counterinsurgent usually does not have access to. The insurgent quickly realizes that it is their superior knowledge of both the physical terrain and the human terrain (the local people) that shifts the advantage toward them, while the technology heavy and more conventionally powerful counterinsurgents quickly become bogged down, reactionary, and confounded in the absence of understanding of the local environment.

In urban environments, the insurgent also has the additional advantage of blending into the masses. In urban environments, the insurgent looks like the average city dwelling citizen, providing them with the ability to hide and plan in plain sight. This

effect is even more pronounced when dealing with a foreign counterinsurgency force. Urban insurgencies also present unique opportunities for the insurgent, particularly when attempting a coercive approach to insurgency through the use of urban-based terrorism in order to delegitimize the counterinsurgency force and the government in which the insurgents seek to overthrow (e.g., the French in Algeria). Thus, the advantage in irregular wars, whether urban or rural-based, does not favor the more powerful side; rather the advantage most often favors the side prepared and equipped to understand, leverage, and overcome the nuanced challenges and paradoxes of irregular war.

These paradoxical dynamics also lend themselves in shaping how irregular conflict is conducted. Irregular war is just that: Irregular and even arcane, because it is a unique form of conflict, irregular war can fool the professional soldier into approaching the conflict as they might a conventional war, by using overwhelming firepower, advanced technology, and strong offensive action. Yet, it is only natural to perform what one knows best, and thus if the counterinsurgent understands best how to employ conventional methods, it is highly likely that the counterinsurgent will use these conventional methods. Experienced insurgents are often fully aware of such tendencies which are illustrated throughout contemporary and modern history.[10] Thus insurgent leaders often play to such approaches, luring the stronger foe to make mistakes with their superior strength, tempting them into clumsily wielding force when striking at insurgents. A common example includes shooting from population centers in hopes of provoking strikes that result in innocent victims. Another example is distribution of propaganda,

[10] A few examples include the French in Algeria, The British in India, and the U.S. in Vietnam, all which demonstrate the ineffectual approach of using overwhelming force to destroy an insurgency. The results of these insurgencies demonstrated that although they did cause considerable, even enormous, losses to the insurgents, the long-term outcome required a political settlement rather than purely a military solution.

aimed at winning support in population centers and casting blame for misdeeds on "occupiers." Such tactics, of which there are many, are common, effective, and of little or no cost to the insurgent.

Likewise, the counterinsurgents attempt to lure the insurgents to make miscalculations and alienate them against the population. Common approaches include information operations (propaganda) and campaigns targeting the local population (e.g., illustrating how the insurgents are "terrorists" and "murderers"). The primary point is that successful irregular wars are fought primarily with population support in mind, and not strictly through the barrel of a gun. In fact, the use of extreme violence often undermines the overall effort, ending with both blaming unnecessary violence on the other, both sides alienating themselves against the population, and often creating a stalemate. Regardless, the side that invariably wins in the long-run is the side with population support—and is able to maintain that support over the duration of the conflict. Such an assertion is what American interagency irregular war policy is based upon. The U.S Government Counterinsurgency Guide illustrates this concept:

> American counterinsurgency practice rests on a number of assumptions: that the decisive effort is rarely military (although security is the essential prerequisite for success); that our efforts must be directed to the creation of local and national governmental structures that will serve their populations, and, over time, replace the efforts of foreign partners; that superior knowledge, and in particular, understanding of the 'human terrain' is essential; and that we must have the patience to persevere in what will necessarily prove long struggles.[11]

[11] U.S. Government, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington D.C.: Bureau of Pol-Mil Affairs, 2009), Preface.

The Importance of Learning and Adaptation

Irregular warfare is also a competition of who learns and adapts the most rapidly. This dynamic is perhaps even more important than conventional tactical and strategic prowess or even the forms of weaponry used. The weapon of most value in an insurgency is the human mind and the ability to think quickly and shift tactics quickly and seamlessly. Irregular warfare highlights the "learning" aspects of war in order to rapidly adjust to the adversary's actions, just as conventional war highlights tactical prowess and the effective use of technology. While the military academies are the school houses of professional armies, the battlefield is the school house of the insurgent. Insurgency is most effective when it is a field-driven learning environment. While few theories can teach how to effectively defeat more powerful enemies, the true value of insurgent strategy is that it mitigates advanced technology from a position of weakness and places a heavy focus on the role and support by the relatively "powerless" population. To do this, the insurgent must have basic knowledge of the adversaries' technological capabilities while simultaneously reducing warfare down to its most rudimentary elements, such as flexibility, mobility, and superior intelligence. In other words, the insurgent must know what technology can and cannot do and then exploit it at the point of weakness. To illustrate, despite extraordinary surveillance capabilities from satellites and spy drones, these technologies cannot discern the difference between an insurgent and a common villager in similar dress, speaking the same language. Rather, it is usually only the local villager who can distinguish between the two as only they know the names and faces of everyone residing in the village, and are able to discern between slight differences of dialect. Thus, the capabilities needed are rarely simply technological

(although they can assist when employed intelligently); rather obtaining population support, and derive critical information as a result, is critical.

But just as insurgents learn and adapt to their enemies, counterinsurgents also seek to rapidly learn and adapt to the insurgents' tactics and strategies. To the learning insurgent and counterinsurgent, being "defeated" in an operation is an opportunity to learn and redevelop tactics. The side that learns the quickest and rapidly applies "lessons learned" in the field will have the advantage. In a war based on who learns and adjusts the most rapidly, an important distinction to be made is the type of lessons learned and applied. For both insurgents and counterinsurgents, a tactical lesson from the battlefield is of less significance than strategic lessons that guide the overall strategic effort such as how to communicate better with the local population. Certainly, conflict field tradecraft (e.g. firing a weapon effectively) is important but such tactics are a function of practice and repetition. In contrast, learning to win over a population is a mixture of complex politics, psychology, sociology, and conflict tradecraft. As the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guidance document highlights:

> [Insurgency] is primarily a political struggle, in which both sides use armed force to create space for their political, economic and influence activities to be effective. Insurgency is not always conducted by a single group with a centralized, military-style command structure, but may involve a complex matrix of different actors with various aims, loosely connected in dynamic and non-hierarchical networks. To be successful, insurgencies require charismatic leadership, supporters, recruits, supplies, safe havens and funding (often from illicit activities). They only need the active support of a few enabling individuals, but the passive acquiescence of a large proportion of the contested population will give a higher probability of success. This is best achieved when the political cause of the insurgency has strong appeal, manipulating religious, tribal or local identity to exploit common societal grievances or needs. Insurgents seek to gain control of populations through a combination of persuasion, subversion and coercion while using guerrilla tactics to offset the strengths of government security forces. Their intent is usually to protract the struggle, exhaust the government and win sufficient popular support to force capitulation or political

> accommodation. Consequently, insurgencies evolve through a series of stages, though the progression and outcome will be different in almost every case.[12]

In conclusion, irregular warfare, including both insurgency and counterinsurgency, is a unique form of conflict. Irregular war does not ascribe to traditional or conventional rules for a variety of reasons. First, irregular conflict is primarily political on all levels—from the high-level strategy to the grass-roots tactics of the individual fighter. Secondly, irregular warfare's focus is on very different types of "terrain." While conventional war places great emphasis on capturing physical terrain, it is the human terrain that matters most in irregular war. In wars among populations, it matters not if the geographic terrain captured amounts to unsustainable losses in resources over time as well as extending forces beyond capability opening it up to constant insurgent harassment. Third, conventional strength means little in irregular war. The skills required for victory in irregular war are often distinct from the skills required to win in conventional conflict. In irregular war, greater focus is placed upon winning the "hearts and minds" of the population rather than on individual tactics. The philosophy in irregular war is premised on the notion that whoever achieves the population's support—lending the advantages of time, space, and will—achieves overwhelming advantages. Such a philosophy is reflected in the Afghan proverb, "You [the invaders] have the watches, but we [the opposition] have the time."[13]

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[12] Ibid., 2.

[13] John D. McHugh, Ben Summers, Catherine Arend, Michael Tait, and Lindsay Poulton, "You have the watches, but we have the time," in *The Guardian*, October 14, 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2008/oct/13/afghanistan-taliban-us-army (accessed April 9, 2011).

CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN IRREGULAR WAR

> That these are our grievances which we have thus laid before his majesty, with that freedom of language and sentiment which becomes a free people claiming their rights as derived from the laws of nature, and not as the gift of their chief magistrate. –Thomas Jefferson, 1774

In viewing insurgency and counterinsurgency through the lens of success and the ability to apply lessons learned, America's results are historically mixed. In earlier periods, America achieved extraordinary success fighting as insurgents ("patriots") during the American Revolution, but fared less successfully in the modern age of counterinsurgency, particularly in contemporary times, such as in Vietnam, Somalia, and Afghanistan. Yet, despite the controversial nature of irregular warfare America performed successfully in the Indian Wars and the Philippines, countering strong albeit flawed insurgent movements. Other counterinsurgency efforts remain difficult to determine regarding America's level of success, including current efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This chapter comprehensively discusses America's experience in irregular conflict, both insurgency and counterinsurgency, highlighting those conflicts with long-term American involvement. Finally, this chapter seeks to analyze what went right and/or wrong and distill what lessons can be drawn from successes and failures.

1775-1883: An American Insurgency

America is the product of a revolutionary birth, born of insurgency. It is well documented that American colonists fought a prolonged bloody war against British counterinsurgents seeking to maintain America in the British Empire. Many scholars of the Revolutionary War agree that the British forces were superior in terms of military professionalism, technology, proficiency, and even discipline regarding conventional tactics and strategy. To overcome these deficits, the American militants utilized an array of irregular tactics to make up for what would have been failure in conventional success. To illustrate, scholars argue that some of the most impactful military victories carried out by George Washington's fighters often utilized guerrilla style military tactics, such as the Battle of Trenton, a post-Christmas raid that led to an overwhelming victory against the Hessian mercenaries, an ambush in inclement weather as the Hessians recovered from the previous evening's festivities. Individual battles aside, within the larger strategic aspect of the American Revolutionary War, American insurgents used a wide array of contemporary insurgent tactics, utilizing such methods as hit and run ambush attacks, covert smuggling of weaponry and resources, assassination, psychological operations, and collecting intelligence from citizens, to name but a few. In fact, the American campaign against the Hessian units serves to epitomize modern irregular warfare, such as the attempt to propagandize the Hessians into joining the American ranks with the enticement of free land and citizenship.[14] This was in stark contrast to the traditional style of British warfare which was characterized as large unit tactics accustomed to major battles in open spaces. In British custom, guerrilla warfare was an abomination and not

[14] Everett C. Wilkie, Jr., "Franklin and 'The Sale of the Hessians': The Growth of a Myth," in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 127, No. 3 (Jun. 16, 1983), pp. 202-212.

worthy of gentlemanly conduct in war. However, after a few disastrous outings against the British, the American militants quickly came to terms with the realization that they could not be victorious in the early stages of the revolution if they fought according to British rules of warfare. However, as we will see later, much like Mao's notion of moving toward conventional force in the late stages of insurgency (i.e., the "strategic offensive" stage), the Americans eventually defeated the British on conventional terms and with conventional armies. Yet, to survive the early stages of the insurgency, the Americans' success came largely as a result of guerrilla style fighting amongst a sympathetic population.

In the early stages of the insurrection, guerrilla warfare was a primary tool in the tactics that were employed by the American insurgents. However, the overall strategy was one of strategic patience and constant harassment in a territory that sympathized with patriots. The long-term effect of this strategy was the slow attrition of the British as guerrilla fighters, often common citizens, attacked seemingly randomly, only to dissolve back into the population centers or the countryside, leaving the British with the weary realization that they were unable to respond effectively. Therefore, the strategy was two-fold. First, the strategy sought the destruction of military morale by sowing frustration, confusion, and helplessness. Secondly, the strategy attempted to utilize civilian popular support in order to attrite the British in men and materiel.

Although a heavy-handed British strategy targeting civilians was never implemented throughout the American colony, the involvement of the population was inevitable. The presence of large numbers of "Loyalists," those loyal to the King and British Empire, presented challenges for the British in attempting not to isolate the

Loyalists and push them toward support of the insurgents. Due to the interest in retaining Loyalist sympathizers, the British chose not to make a concerted effort to harshly suppress the overall civilian population. However, when the British overreached in their attempt to keep civilian population hubs under control, due in large part to a vast array of grievances including taxation, it inevitably led to anger and resentment against British occupation. In short, the Americans wanted their liberty and nothing assuaged that growing momentum.

As the situation continued to develop over time, the British attempts at enforcing laws, targeting militants and propagandists, and billeting within cities further diminished support for the British presence. The ever-growing colonialist grievances played into the hands of revolutionary leaders. Such grievances provided easy themes for propaganda which individuals such as Thomas Paine frequently seized upon. In response, as the revolutionary support base grew, due in large part to growing grievances and revolutionary sympathy, counterproductive British practices pushed Loyalist to support revolutionary causes. One such issue that caused contention was that the use of the Hessian mercenaries, sent to put down the insurrection, rather than the King using British soldiers exclusively, was seen as an insult.[15] Furthermore, the more protracted the war became, and the more frequently the British targeted population centers to purge insurgents and their sympathizers, the more their efforts appeared to fail in the eyes of the American population. Thus, as the conflict escalated without an apparent British victory

[15]Evidence of American colonialists' anger can be found within Thomas Paine's pamphlet, "The Rights of Man." See, Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (NuVision Publications, LLC, 2007), http://books.google.com/books?id=-zVAXNTwgD8C&pg=PA109&lpg=PA109&dq=Thomas+Paine%2BHessians&source=bl&ots=PdHKXUMPUs&sig=GoDFnKTkzZD4dR1BTtS1jRAHdlM&hl=en&ei=2gaiTZqIHY2LhQeR6_GLBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CE4Q6AEwCA#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed April 10, 2011).

at hand, the more inclined the population became to support the local American insurgents.

The long-term successful American strategy, whether by design, accident, or a combination, effectively separated British forces from popular support. The American revolutionary strategy was based first and foremost on swaying popular support toward the revolutionary cause and then defeating the British forces on the battlefield through protracted warfare. To illustrate the value of propaganda on this front, revolutionary propaganda issued throughout the colony is well documented and the propaganda pamphlets written at the time still sell well today. A few of these propagandists are now known as American "founding fathers," reflecting the level of influence they had during the war. These two efforts—issuing propaganda to sway the population and the strategy of protracted warfare—were conducted in tandem as General Washington well understood that effective propaganda and defeating the British on the battlefield by whatever means necessary roused further popular support for his insurgent army. Additionally, the prolonging of the war resulted in wearing down the British forces in both lives and treasure, while seeking to deteriorate the lines of public support from the British homeland for the continuation of the war. The strategy's success was observable as by 1780, immediately following General Cornwallis's surrender to George Washington, the British government fell to the opposition group, the Peace Party, due largely to lack of political will for the war's continuation.[16] This political turn of events effectively ended the war in 1781, though it was not formally concluded until 1783 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Following Cornwallis's surrender and the subsequent

[16] Piers Mackesy, *The War for America: 1775–1783* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993) 435.

change of the British government, no major battles ensued and the British forces remained largely garrisoned until the official end of the war.

Several lessons can be garnered from the American Revolution for both insurgency and counterinsurgency. Looking first at counterinsurgency lessons, the British learned that finding the right balance between coercion and leniency is extraordinarily difficult. While the British military tried hard not to terrorize the American population with excessive force, the politicians in London failed to understand that taxation and political dominance did not play well in the American colony and allowed colonial propagandists easy opportunities to develop sympathy through pamphleteering in the public. Secondly, the British likely learned that perceptions of the local population are critical. When the British made the decision to bring in outside mercenaries to fight Britain's fight, this further alienated the British from the American population. Also, while the Boston massacre might not have been a massacre by most standards, the Boston Gazette made it appear as premeditated murder by British soldiers.[17] Such propaganda is critical in building sympathy for and against an insurgency. In the case of the American Revolution, the British stood by idly as propaganda spread from city to city and into the countryside. This challenge of understanding the population was worsened by the fact that while Britain maintained strength in the cities, they had little presence and authority in the countryside.[18]

In looking at the American insurgency, several lessons can also be distilled. First, the American strategy of protraction worked well, eroding British military morale while

[17] "Account of the Boston Massacre," in *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, March 12, 1770, http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/winter96/massacre/massacrepage1.htm (accessed April 10, 2011).
[18] T.H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010) 18.

having a similar effect in the British homeland. Secondly, the American strategy of shifting from guerrilla warfare to conventional warfare at the right phase of the insurgency also worked well, allowing the American army to perform the necessary *coup de grace* with conventional armies and providing the Americans with international legitimacy following victory. Finally, perhaps the most important lesson of the American Revolution is the value of highly effective propaganda, by word-of-mouth or traditional media to both exaggerate and build upon grievances, raise public awareness, and communicate with sympathizers. In short, the American Revolution carries nearly all the hallmarks of modern insurgency and provided one of the earliest examples of contemporary irregular warfare.

The "Hard War" Years: The American Civil War

The American experience in irregular conflict certainly did not end following the attainment of American sovereignty. Several wars were waged by the Americans throughout the nineteenth century, including the War of 1812 (1812-1815); the American Civil War (1861-1865); the Constabulary Years, including Pacification and the Indian Wars (1865-1898); and the Cuban and Philippines campaigns (1898-1902). With some minor exceptions, roughly the first sixty years of the nineteenth century composed of conventionally fought conflicts.

Other than the ongoing Indian Wars, the first major irregular operation against the U.S. Army was during the American Civil War. The Civil War saw a limited degree of concerted population focused activity as the majority of the fighting was focused on conventional warfare, defining the war by large well-known battles that resonate even today, such as the Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of Bull Run, the Battle of

Fredericksburg, and many others. However, the story of major land and sea battles during the Civil War misses the larger picture. During the Civil War some of the most studied guerrilla fighters emerged, not least of whom was John Mosby, nicknamed the "Grey Ghost," who led the Confederate unit Mosby's Rangers. What occurred between Mosby's Rangers and the Union falls within the definition of guerrilla warfare, pitting Confederate guerrillas against Union counter-guerrillas. Due to the Confederate's military effort to secede from an internationally recognized nation-state, Mosby's Rangers should be defined as part of a larger Confederate insurgency, albeit in the style of guerrilla warfare often associated with modern insurgency. As we will examine, Mosby was indeed successful enough that it changed the way America fought in irregular conflict, bringing to the fore a harsher approach to counterinsurgency which played out later in the Indian Wars and the Philippines.

In relation to the scale of conventional forces in the Civil War, the use of guerrillas was miniscule. Further, the peripheral attention that guerrilla tactics received from scholars makes it difficult to conclude exactly how successful the guerrilla approach was to the end result of the Civil War. There is even little agreement amongst Civil War scholars as to whether or not Confederate guerrillas were an intended part of the primary Confederate strategy. For example, a highly regarded Confederate General disparaged Mosby's tactics and even requested General Robert E. Lee to disband Mosby's Rangers.[19] Some of these negative perceptions were likely the result of a lack of consistency among the guerrillas. While there were professional soldiers serving as guerrillas, such as

[19] Hugh C. Keen and Horace Mewborn, *43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1993) 105.

Mosby's Rangers, others were little more than criminals in the business of savagery. As one author writes of the Confederate guerrillas:

> The complexity surrounding the term guerrilla makes it difficult to establish exact definitions of every Southerner who conducted irregular warfare against the Union Army…Those who conducted guerrilla warfare against the invading Union Army fit many different definitions. There were Confederate cavalrymen, such as Nathan Bedford Forest and John Hunt Morgan, who practiced evasive hit-and-run-style tactics as part of organized and sanctioned Confederate raid operations. So-called partisan rangers, who often wore Confederate uniforms but enjoyed complete autonomy from the conventional force, preyed on Federal railroads, telegraph lines, and supply wagons. There were bushwhackers who, in the guise of innocent civilians, waylaid Union pickets for the mere purpose of robbery or murder. Perhaps the most difficult class of guerrilla to define, although quite prevalent, was that which attacked simply for the sake of resisting the Union invaders.[20]

Several prominent Union generals concluded that when dealing with successful Confederate guerrillas, the larger reality was that they were facing a hostile population rather than merely hostile fighters. The Union soon realized that the Confederate militants were being protected by the population. As the war continued, the Confederate guerrillas took their toll on the Union, placing enormous pressure on their logistical lines and causing substantial losses to the Union ranks. In response, and out of growing desperation to defeat the demoralizing and formidable Confederate guerrillas, the Union formulated the policy of "hard war," targeting strategic population centers in order to punish and instill fear within the population supporting the Confederate guerrillas. Thus, the Union sought to use fear as the ultimate disincentive to stop popular support for guerrilla fighters.[21] This strategy sought to divide the population from the insurgents and thus remove the life-lines which sustained them both logistically and morally. Andrew

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[20] Clay Montcastle, *Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003) 3.
[21] Andrew Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1860-1941* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1998) 37.

Birtle, a military historian, summarizes the counter-guerrilla strategy employed by the Union:

> The extent to which the policy of destruction was successful in rooting out the guerrillas varied depending upon the circumstances. Nevertheless, commanders had enough success that by 1865 devastation rather than moderation had become the guiding principle of federal armies in suppressing the insurrection. This did not mean that the Army had abandoned moderation entirely. Many officers felt uncomfortable about denying quarter and burning farms and crops, and even those who endorsed the harshest measures endeavored to prevent their soldiers from degenerating into the kind of lawlessness that they so despised in the guerrillas. Indeed, many of the same officers who declared a "war of extermination" against the guerrillas offered generous terms of amnesty to those who voluntarily laid down their arms. Nor did the Army action indiscriminately, for while excesses did occur, for the most part federal actions represented what one historian has described as a "directed severity" that was aimed at specific targets (most notably upper-class secessionists, guerrillas, and military resources) than at Southern society as a whole.[22]

While the Confederate effort with guerrilla warfare did not succeed in winning the war, it was not a result of the failure of the guerrilla approach itself, but rather the larger strategy employed by the South. Looking specifically at the guerrilla aspects employed by the Confederacy, it had enough effect to force new approaches by the Union military. Therefore, what came as a result of the Confederate guerrilla tactics was the development of a new approach to how America viewed effective counterinsurgency (and thus a major subset of counterinsurgency being counter-guerrilla operations). Sherman's "March to the Sea," leaving in its wake massive infrastructure devastation, decimated private property, and ultimately weakened Confederate resolve, was among the first of many campaigns illustrating America's emerging "hard war" military philosophy.

The military strategic decision to target population centers perceived as supporting insurgents is a significant landmark in American counterinsurgency doctrine.

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[22] Ibid., 39-40.

For the Union, what started as an attempt to destroy bushwhackers, bandits and common criminals quickly escalated into a full-fledged effort to remove popular support for an army of insurgents set upon picking apart Union armies through irregular warfare. As the confederate insurgents demonstrated their capability to wreak havoc upon the Union, the Union decided the only way to stop them was to target the sources of their support—the sympathetic population. Leading the effort in this shift in Union policy was General Tecumseh Sherman, seen by some scholars as the architect of this campaign of violence and destruction against the Confederate population centers, referred to as the "hard war" approach. Because of the violence targeting civilians, including the burning of crops, property and homes, scholars often refer to this as a form of "punitive war,"[23] or "hard war," similar in many respects to past military campaigns resulting in large civilian casualties in a strategy to break the will of opposition, be it passive or active support from the population. However, this shift had a long-term impact on future American counterinsurgency operations, as it was codified in the U.S. Military Academy, the training grounds for future military officers, that such tactics were to be taught as best practices meriting future replication. As Birtle writes, "Indeed, the greatest contribution of the Civil War to the development of Army doctrine was not in the charting of new ideas but in the validation and sanctification of old ones."[24]

The Indian Wars

A strong lineage of counter-guerrilla and counterinsurgency warfare was transmitted from centuries of fighting between American colonists (later the American

[23] Mountcastle, *Punitive War*, introduction.
[24] Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency*, 48.

army) and the Native American Indians. Open warfare between Native Americans and the American colonists began in 1634 with the Pequot War in present-day Southern New England. Conflicts of varying size and intensity occurred until approximately 1918 with the surrender of a band of Yaquis Indians in the State of Arizona. Within those centuries the American Indian Wars resulted in enormous loss of life and treasure for all sides. In the end, the Native Americans emerged devastated as a people, with almost everything about their way of life, culture, and sense of history altered. The following is an overview of what occurred throughout these irregular conflicts and what lessons can be taken from the long and costly civilizational war.

The last Indian threat of expulsion of the settlers occurred in 1763-1766 with Pontiac's Rebellion. After Pontiac's near victory, Native American offensive efforts gave way to defensive efforts as colonialist militias and armies focused on Native American population centers, pushing ever further into Indian Territory. The only period of relative calm between settlers and Western powers occurred during various outbreaks of war between Western nations, such as the American Revolution and the Civil War, but even these periods witnessed violence between the two sides. Contributing to further hardship of the native tribes was continuous warfare among the Native American tribes. Thus, over the course of centuries of conflict the Native populations faced enormous strain across much of the American expanse.

Lessons of a Long and Brutal War

The way the Native Americans fought was very different from the way in which traditional European armies fought. Europeans employed large forces to fight in open terrain, while Native Americans employed guerrilla fighting techniques, employing quick

strike and retreat tactics and thus seeking the element of surprise. While European military tradition was familiar with irregular warfare, dating to at least the Thirty Years' War,[25] it was never seen as a preferable way in which to fight and was usually only undertaken when main-force units had been destroyed and pushed to desperation, or employed as a distraction operation (e.g., to harass and demoralize enemy units with the goal of setting up future larger-scale conventional battles).

To add to the Americans' challenges, the Native American guerrilla tactics were often conducted masterfully. What is certain is that the Native Americans were proficient guerrilla fighters with extensive experience and capability in such forms of warfare, having practiced and perfected the techniques over millennia. Military scholars also often conclude that the average native fighter was a more agile and often more skilled fighter than the average American soldier. However, effective guerrilla tactics did not lead to victory for a variety of reasons. Why the American Indians fared so poorly during the Indian Wars had much more to do with social structure than military capability and capacity.

Critical vulnerabilities of the American Indians existed throughout the duration of the Indian Wars. One critical strategic difference between the two was that Native American societies never shifted from loose tribal bands toward the pursuit of some aspects of modern usages of large defensive alliances. As one U.S. Naval Academy historian summarized, "they [Native Americans] remained a pre-modern people."[26] The vulnerability of Native American premodernity is that institutional culture and social

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[25] Walter Laqueur, "The Origins of Guerrilla Doctrine," in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.10, No.3 (July 1975) 341.

[26] Wayne Hsieh, "The U.S. Interagency Experience on Stabilization during the Indian Wars," in *USAID*, Washington, D.C., November 18, 2010.

structures matter, particularly in a conflict in which the population support and sustainment is of strategic importance. To further illustrate, this lack of political and military modernity left native populations vulnerable to large and well-supplied national armies which were able to attrite the American Indians over time, from large populations to a total annihilation of several tribes. While disease was also a factor outside of conflict, the means in which the conflict was fought was dictated by the structure and values of both civilizations. For the Indians, rapid mobility was favored, while the Americans favored strong well supplied armies, tactically linking outposts deep into the heart of Indian Territory. Only the Americans had the luxury of shifting tactics and strategies after hard lessons were learned fighting the Indians. In contrast, the American Indians were hemmed in by a strong sense of immutable culture, resource cultivation and use, and social structure. While the Native Americans made the war protracted, bloody, and deeply frustrating for the Americans, they did not win ultimately due to these strong structural and cultural constraints.

In looking at some of these constraints, the Native Americans placed strong emphasis on "warrior culture" and in many aspects were arguably superior warriors. As one author noted, the Seminole War in Florida "cost the lives of ten soldiers and approximately ten thousand dollars for every Seminole either killed or captured."[27] Despite these individual-level advantages, the native warriors lacked large scale organizational tactics and a political tradition of large and frequent military alliances. In contrast, the Americans inherited both traditions from European military tradition and doctrine, effectively employing these strategies against the British during the American

[27] Jr. John J. Tierney, *Chasing Ghosts: Unconventional Warfare in American History* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 90.

Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and all of the major wars that followed. For a short time, and in limited scale, the Native Americans attempted to form limited military alliances, but European and American forces were frequently able to turn the tribes against one another with relative ease. One such example was the use of Crow scouts against Sioux tribes in the American West. In this case, the Americans capitalized on hard feelings from past conflicts between the two. What this permitted was the weakening of enemy tribes through the use of neighboring tribes far more familiar with American Indian tribal and warfare customs than was obtainable from within the U.S. Army.[28] It is noteworthy that due to its effectiveness, practitioners still use this approach today.

However, the Native Americans held a unique advantage that caused considerable consternation amongst the Americans. This key advantage was that the Native Americans understood guerrilla warfare far better than the settlers and soldiers and rejected defined Western constraints in their style of warfare, often striking at civilians and outposts and quickly dissolving back into the countryside, forests, and swamps. While it has been argued that this approach caused the war to become more existential, drawing both into "total war," the very fact the natives conducted effective guerrilla warfare illustrated that native tribes understood the strategy of "shaping" population sentiment with long-term strategy. Similar to the American Civil War and the strategy of attacking insurgent-sympathizing populations, native tribes hoped to raise the stakes of expansion to a level the settlers were not willing to pay. In this sense, the Native

[28] Ibid.

Americans were practicing what the U.S. Army termed the "hard war" approach, learned in past insurgencies and counterinsurgencies.

Today, we commonly refer to such tactics against civilians as "terrorism" and even "war crimes." But such tactics were familiar to Western armies, and were often employed as a legitimate form of warfare (e.g., WWII's frequent bombing of cities just twenty years following the last Indian conflict). Just as in the Civil War, such tactics were designed to weaken the resolve of the population, destroy infrastructure, and raise the cost of warfare to an unsustainable level. Yet, in the case of the Indian Wars, rather than capitulation, such tactics led to far bloodier conflicts and caused elevated levels of hatred on both sides. To illustrate, Captain Randolph Marcy, a frontier U.S. Army officer, quoted a soldier which demonstrated the level of hatred toward the Natives.

> "They are the most onsartainest varmints in all creation, and I reckon tha'r not mor'n half human; for you never seed a human, arter you'd fed and treated him to the best fixins in your lodge, jist turn round and steal all your horses, or ary other thing he could lay his hands on. No, not adzackly. He would feel kinder grateful, and ask you to spread a blanket in his lodge ef you ever passed that a-way. But the Injun he don't care shucks for you, and is rady to do you a heap of mischief as soon as he quits your feed. No, Cap.," he continued, "it's not the right way to give um presents to buy peace; but ef I war governor of these yeer United States, I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd invite um all to a big feast, and make b'lieve I wanted to have a big talk; and as soon as I got um all together, I'd pitch in and sculp about half of um, and then t'other half would be mighty glad to make peace that would stick. That's the way I'd make a treaty with the dog'ond, red-bellied varmints; and as sure as you're born, Cap., that's the only way."
> I suggested to him the idea that there would be a lack of good faith and honor in such a proceeding, and that it would be much more in accordance with my notions of fair dealing to meet openly in the field, and there endeavor to punish them if they deserve it. To this he replied, "taint no use to talk about honor with them, Cap.; they hain't got no such thing in um; and they won't show fair fight, any way you can fix it. Don't they kill and sculp a white man when-ar they get the better on him? The mean varmints, they'll never behave themselves until you give um a clean out and out licking. They can't onderstand white folks' ways, and they won't learn um; and ef you treat um decently, they think you ar afeard. You may

> depend on't, Cap., the only way to treat Injuns is to thrash them well at first, then the balance will sorter take to you and behave themselves."[29]

As war between the U.S. Army, citizen militias, and the native warriors continued, American soldiers and militias became more adept at Indian forms of guerrilla warfare. In the historical case of the Indian Wars, prolonged warfare allowed time for learning and adjustment by the U.S. as well as the development of understanding of American Indian culture and vulnerabilities. Once these vulnerabilities were understood, they were exploited by the development of new forms of counter-guerrilla tactics by the Americans. Many of these new tactics targeted the American Indian population centers in an attempt to "draw out" the Indian fighter who was more accustomed to ambush and rapid withdrawal tactics. A typical approach by the U.S. was to destroy Indian food infrastructure and crops, thereby reducing the capability of even the most ardent Native American resistance. As one scholar writes,

> The end of the war [the Seminole War] came under the strategy devised by Col. William J. Worth. He refused to continue the six-year-long wild goose chase after an enemy that could seldom be found and, even when found, rarely gave battle. Worthy went directly for the jugular of every guerrilla's strategy; his support. Using summer campaigns for the first time (the summer had always been considered too hot), Worth led his men directly against the settlements and crops of the Seminoles, destroying their means of subsistence and preventing them from raising and harvesting further crops. His troops suffered greatly from sickness, but their method worked. Without subsistence, even the fierce resistance of the Indians could not be maintained.[30]

As will be illustrated, the Indian Wars escalated from the destruction of food infrastructure to attacks at the very heart of Indian life, the population centers.

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[29] Randolph B. Marcy, *The Prairie Traveler: The 1859 Handbook for Westbound Pioneers* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2006) 211-212.
[30] Tierney, *Chasing Ghosts*, 90.

While never formally documented, many lessons from the early years of the Indian Wars were transmitted to and from the Union in putting down the Confederate guerrillas. Just as confederate guerrillas lived among and sought support from local populations, so too did the Indian fighters live and receive support from their villages. An early lesson from the Indian Wars was that the population was the source of strength for the Indian warriors, and thus had to be dealt with in order to remove civilian support from the calculation of the conflict. After years of mutual attacks on civilians, "total war" was brought to bear, both sides showing little interest in limiting the war to the fighters. Through total war strategy, the Americans sought to raise the cost of war to a level too high for the Native Americans to absorb, and thus encouraged their relocation to "reservations." An illustration of these "total war" strategies are well summarized by a U.S. Army participant in the Bad Axe Massacres in 1832, an incident which left numerous Native women and children dead and injured as soldiers tried to capture Native population centers:

> During the engagement we killed some of the squaws through mistake. It was a great misfortune to those miserable squaws and children, that they did not carry into execution [the plan] they had formed on the morning of the battle -- that was, to come and meet us, and surrender themselves prisoners of war. It was a horrid sight to witness little children, wounded and suffering the most excruciating pain, although they were of the savage enemy, and the common enemy of the country.[31]

Despite the controversial nature of such tactics, many lessons were learned and transferred for future engagements as a result of this new style of warfare on the frontier of American expansion. During the Civil War, the Union tapped into these earlier

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[31] John Allen Wakefield and Frank Everett Stevens, eds. *History of the War between the United States and the Sac and Fox Nations of Indians, and Parts of Other Disaffected Tribes of Indians, in the Years Eighteen Hundred and Twenty-Seven, Thirty-One, and Thirty-Two*; Reprinted as: *Wakefield's History of the Black Hawk War*, Original Publication: Jacksonville, Ill.: Calvin Goudy, 1834. Reprint Publication: Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1908, Chapter 7: Section 133, and Chapter 8: Section 144. Retrieved 22 October 2007

experiences of "total war," similarly punishing secessionist populations with "hard war" tactics, resulting in the utter destruction of the Southern economy. However, just as the lessons from the early Indian Wars were utilized during the Civil War, likewise the Civil War experience also transferred and reinforced its own lessons against Indian tribes during the later westward expansion, which resumed in full-force following the Civil War. While the post-Antebellum U.S. Army never formally codified these "lessons learned" from the early Indian Wars, many lessons were retained due to the fact that several prominent Civil War leaders, known for developing the "hard war" strategy against the Confederate population, saw action once again in the frontier Indian Wars.[32] To illustrate this transfer of experience and knowledge from the Civil War to the application in Indian Wars, Andrew Birtle writes:

> Mahan's [Dennis Hart Mahan first introduced Indian warfare into West Point's curriculum in 1835] approach to Indian warfare was reinforced in the minds of officers by the Army's experience in the Civil War. Many soldiers emerged from the rebellion convinced that the best way to win a "peoples" war was to strike at the foundation of resistance—the enemy population. Now, with the rebellion crushed, the officers were prepared to apply the same strategy of destruction to undermine the American Indians physical and moral ability to resist.[33]

While many military officers were pleased with transferring from the Reconstruction Era South following the Civil War, hoping to depart the politics of governing, the frontier would prove to be no less political, far lengthier, and yet more controversial. Birtle summarizes the breadth of the challenge standing before the U.S. Army in the frontier, writing:

> By the mid-century the Native American population west of the Mississippi numbered about 270,000 people divided into over 125 distinct tribal, linguistic, and cultural groups. Although the Army tried to shield the Indians from illegal

[32] Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency*, 60.
[33] Ibid.

> white encroachment, its primary mission was to pursue Indian raiders, punish recalcitrant tribes, and confine the indigenous population to an ever-dwindling area "reserved" for their use. Conflict was an inevitable result of this process. From the signing of a flurry of abortive peace treaties in October 1865 until the suppression of the last Indian uprising at Leech Lake, Minnesota, in October 1898, the Army engaged in over a thousand combats as part of its forcible pacification of the Western Indians.[34]

Betwixt and Between: The Civil War, the Indian Wars, and Modernity

Despite the large number of counter-guerrilla and counterinsurgency wars in which the American armies were engaged throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the era of small wars was not yet truly upon America. While no war rivaled the collective length of the Indian Wars, and casualties were never as great as in America's conventional wars, "small wars," an earlier term for irregular wars, were prolific throughout the early twentieth century and continue to this day. The first of these small wars in the twentieth century was the Philippines, which remarkably has yet to be fully resolved now over a hundred years after America's first intervention into the country. Nevertheless, the Philippines campaign remains among the most important early counterinsurgency campaigns in American military history. The Philippines campaign of 1899-1902 was both similar and different from past counter-guerrilla and counterinsurgency operations in America's history. Similarities include the policy of "chastisement," while a difference includes the policy "attraction."

Until Mao Tse-tung arrived on the global scene in the mid-twentieth century, giving rise to future American counterinsurgency campaigns (e.g., Vietnam), the Philippines insurgency represents the closest case-study to modern insurgency that the Americans faced. The insurgency used a sophisticated albeit brutal approach to

[34] Ibid., 58.

population control and coercion as well as modern insurgent concepts of the erosion of political will on the domestic base of the invading military force. It was in many ways very similar to Mao's approach a half-century later. One scholar summarizes the Filipino insurgent strategy:

> …military victory was never the aim of Filipino leaders after 1899. Instead, they hoped to undermine America's will to continue the struggle by harassing U.S. military forces. The Filipinos were well aware that many Americans opposed the government's adventure in imperialism, and they consciously played to this audience, timing their offensives to coincide with the presidential election of November 1900 in the hope that a disenchanted electorate would replace McKinley with the avowed anti-imperialist, William Jennings Bryan…the U.S. Army faced a formidable challenge in the Filipino resistance movement, incorporating as it did many of the characteristics of a modern guerrilla movement, including a politico-military organization, military and paramilitary units, and a strategy of political and guerrilla warfare.[35]

In order to defeat this sophisticated mixture of political and military savvy, America was forced to rapidly adjust many elements of military doctrine, policy, and practice, devised from the past one hundred and twenty-five years of insurgency and counter-guerrilla warfare. Essentially, America was moving in the direction of truly modern counterinsurgency and away from merely counter-guerrilla fighting, an approach more devoid of political and revolutionary zeal as an ideological foundation. While not fully developed, the modern age of irregular warfare was an important part of the American military establishment, forcing it to move in many new unfamiliar and unconventional directions.

While many tactical modifications were developed during the Philippines campaign (e.g., an adaptation to jungle warfare), perhaps the most unique innovation was the strategic policy of "attraction" as a parallel effort to practicing "chastisement" (i.e.,

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[35] Ibid., 112.

the "hard war" approach). What this strategic policy shift meant was that the U.S. Army now understood the evolving nature of a "people's war," and the challenges of fighting such a war outside the American homeland and in a distinctly different cultural environment. This is of profound importance, as the rules of domestic counterinsurgency are distinctly different from those of foreign counterinsurgency (e.g., understand of the culture, terrain, and population sentiments). Additionally, the stakes were different from fighting on the American home front. The difference was that when fighting in foreign lands, the American people had less tolerance for sustained casualties, while fighting on the home front meant the people on all sides had little choice but to endure larger casualties due to an often perceived "existential" struggle.

In order to adjust to these new constraints of domestic support, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps developed new socially-driven concepts to more rapidly "win over" populations rather than continue the fight endlessly, which would have been intolerable to the voting American public now aware of overseas activities due to the emerging modern media. Thus, the concept of "attraction" was developed not merely by the U.S. Army, but by the administration of President McKinley itself, himself interested in maintain voter support. President McKinley personally ordered the contingency commander, General Otis, to "win the confidence, respect, and admiration of the inhabitants of the Philippines."[36] The author goes on to describe General Otis:

> As the Army spread out over the Philippine archipelago, Otis and his commanders in the field followed these precepts closely. Ordering their men to respect the people and their customs, they imposed strict discipline, forbidding looting and wanton destruction and punishing those who committed such crimes. They paid in cash for supplies requisitioned from the populace, in an effort to win its favor and counter the mistrust engendered by insurgent propaganda. They opened schools

[36] Ibid, 119.

> staffed with soldier volunteers, built roads, refurbished markets and other public facilities. Finally, the Army established municipal governments under native officials that were largely based upon Spanish traditions, both to provide basic governmental services to the community and to demonstrate America's commitment to political autonomy for the Philippines at the local level.[37]

President McKinley, feeling strongly about the policy of "attraction," sent the future U.S. President William Howard Taft to "supervise the transition from military to civilian rule in pacified areas."[38] But Taft resided far from the insurgent conflict zones, and therefore held only limited credibility amongst the military leadership despite presidential backing by the Administration. Yet, this partnership between senior U.S. representatives and the U.S. military serves as the first major example of civil-military approaches in counterinsurgency. Although there were unmistakable personality and operational differences between Taft and the military commanders, many aspects worked well, given the popularity of Taft amongst Filipinos residing in the secure cities. As one author writes, "they effectively pursued a complementary two-pronged approach. Taft emphasized the policy of 'attraction' that, from the very beginning, had been an integral part of the army's occupation strategy."[39]

Yet, as the war became prolonged, the policy of attraction became of less an interest to soldiers and their commanders who were on the front lines of a violent and deeply personal counterinsurgency effort. Once General MacArthur assumed command from General Otis, he resolved to step up the more coercive efforts of the counterinsurgency. MacArthur viewed General Otis's policies as too lenient, creating little strategic need for the insurgents to fold or at least compromise with the governing

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[37] Ibid., 119-120.
[38] Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Perseus Books, 2002) 114.
[39] Ibid., 115.

authorities. In many ways, lessons on "chastisement" of insurgent-supporting population were resurrected from the Civil War and Indian Wars in hopes of raising the stakes to a degree that the population and the insurgency decided the costs were too high. In turn, the hope was that this would motivate the insurgency to come to the negotiation table. Max Boot writes of the changing strategic dynamics:

> General Arthur MacArthur gave official sanction to policies designed to punish the *insurrectos* and their sympathizers, for he saw no other way to end the war quickly. On December 20, 1900, he declared martial law over the islands and invoked General Orders 100 (GO 100). Issued by President Lincoln in 1863 and widely imitated by other countries since, this landmark document envisioned war as a social contract: An occupying army had a duty to be humane in its dealings with civilians; to do otherwise would be stupid as well as immoral, for it would turn potential friends into foes. But likewise civilians had a duty not to resist; if they violated this duty, they would be dealt with harshly. GO 100 held that combatants not in uniform would be treated like "highway robbers and pirates" and, along with civilians who aided them, they could be subject to the death penalty…General William Tecumseh Sherman had invoked this order as he cut a swath of destruction through the South, and now MacArthur wanted to do the same in the Philippines. His intent was to force the civilian population, especially the prominent families, to choose sides; neutrality would be considered akin to resistance and punished accordingly.[40]

Unfortunately for some Filipinos, GO 100 was interpreted in more extreme ways by several commanders, leading to very coercive measures against the population. In fact, unlawful violence in the conduct of counterinsurgency required that senior commanders, as well as Congress, step in and hold commanders more accountable for their actions, particularly due to growing public outrage of the conflict. Toward the end of the Philippines campaign, in January 1902, "the Senate committee had begun hearings on atrocities…witnesses testified about the "water cure" [a torture method designed to extract confessions, even more severe than the modern "water boarding" technique],

[40] Ibid, 116.

about villages being burned, and about other extreme steps that had become part of this dirty little war."[41]

To finally end the conflict, the military turned to a "tried and true" method of separating the insurgents from the population: the use of protected and military supplied camps for civilians residing in the region (a strategy used with success by the British in Malaya, and to a limited degree by General Petraeus in Iraq). The tactic is designed to cut off the insurgents from those in the population who may pay taxes or supply food to the insurgents. Essentially, it removed logistical support from the insurgency and made it easier for armies to distinguish the enemy from the civilian. But like most endeavors in war, the camps created additional suffering and even death, primarily due to increased disease due to the large numbers of people in crowded and unsanitary conditions. Boot elaborates:

> Setting up "concentration camps" (not to be confused with death camps) was a traditional counterinsurgency tactics, then being used by the British South Africa and previously employed by the U.S. Army in its campaigns against the Indians, where the camps had been called "reservations." The goal was to separate the insurgent from the population base, for as Mao Tse-tung later explained, "the guerrilla moves among the people as the fish through the water." With more than 300,000 people clustering in his "zones of protection," Bell [Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell, tasked with this policy of separating of the insurgents and the civilian] succeeded in drying up the guerrillas' water. To finish off the insurgency, he sent 4,000 soldiers to search "each ravine, valley, and mountain peak for insurgents and for food," destroying all foodstuffs and capturing or killing all able-bodied men. This unrelenting pressure quickly paid off. On April 16, 1902, Miguel Malvar became the last major guerrilla commander to surrender.[42]

In sum, the Philippines insurgency was a modern insurgency in that it blended population-based tactics to win the "hearts and minds" of the locals with sophisticated

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[41] Ibid., 122.
[42] Ibid., 124.

modern communications aimed at U.S. domestic politics. By utilizing tactics aimed at influencing the American population, the Filipino insurgent leadership demonstrated what Mao would later coin as one of his three main elements of a successful insurgency, the use of popular "will." What Mao realized and wrote about, and what the Philippines insurgency practiced several decades before Mao's book, was that an insurgency must have the support of the domestic population while simultaneously attempting to erode domestic support on the home-front of the invading army. However, the Filipino insurgent leadership failed to understand a critical requirement of eroding the American domestic political will—the need to prolong the war as long as possible. The Filipino leadership failed badly at protracted warfare. As it was, the insurgency was only able to carry out an ebb-and-flow insurgency of approximately four years. In an age of slow international communications, this was far too short for protracted warfare advantages to take hold.

Secondly, the Filipino leadership understood the need to extend the invading army as much as possible. Mao also recognized this tactic decades later, seeking to weaken an army by thinning them out over large geographical terrain.[43] In turn, this thinning along outposts stretched across a large region left armies more vulnerable to random ambushes that were difficult to predict in size and scope. While this worked to a degree, a major constraint which plagued the insurgent leadership was that their geographical terrain was limited to a series of small islands which were relatively easy to isolate, when compared to a large geographical landmass with transnational borders to slip across for protection.

[43] Mao codified this lesson in his book, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, writing: "We must unite the strength of the army with that of the people; we must strike the weak spots in the enemy's flanks, in his front, in his rear. We must make war everywhere and cause dispersal of his forces and dissipation of his strength." See, Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Samuel B. Griffith, trans. (Miami: BN Publishing, 2007) 68.

In addition, ethnic boundaries created a form of "social boundaries" similar to geographical boundaries in that it limited the insurgents' freedom of movement as well as popular support for the insurgents. Thus, many effective tactics were not easy to put into practice despite the relatively modest number of American soldiers in the Philippines.

All these many important factors aside, the most significant weakness of the insurgency in the Philippines was that they lacked a deep popular-based ideology. In the modern age, insurgencies often utilize religion or revolutionary ideology to unite their followers. The only consistent message by the Filipino insurgent leadership to their people was that the Philippines should be sovereign, hardly a resounding war cry for the many Filipinos who either disagreed or saw no suitable local alternative to American governorship. Additionally, the sectarian and ethnic tensions fractured a unified vision of leadership.

Thus, while the Philippines insurgency represents one of the first modern insurgencies in which the Americans were involved, a host of unique challenges prevented many of the required tactics from being effective. What can be concluded is that the Philippines insurgency was a harbinger of things to come, as it came to inform subsequent generations of the requirements to wage a successful politically-based insurgency against a conventionally more powerful adversary. While it lacked a large homogenously-driven ethnic and ideological base in which to build a support-base, it did bring to the fore the validity of using sophisticated strategic communications aimed at the adversary's domestic population. The insurgency also sought to utilize methods well ahead of its time: the very methods that Mao Tse-tung became famous for— the strategy of protracted warfare, stretching the opposition forces, propagandizing, and controlling

the population. Equally as impressive were the counterinsurgency adaptations, which utilized cutting edge approaches to working with local populations, including the employment of locals, weapons buy-back programs, and the study of culture among the U.S. Army—all of which then served as revolutionary "hearts and minds" tactics.[44]

Also noteworthy are the "hard" methods which were employed during the Philippines campaign, many that are now deemed war crimes by modern standards, particularly the use of the "water cure" and other related methods currently defined as torture. However, for the sake of a deeper understanding of the era, one should understand that ethics of warfare have advanced since the pre-Geneva Convention era. Furthermore, as scholars point out, many of these activities were taken from the pages of domestic American police operations against criminals in that era, which often used even harsher methods to extract confessions and mete out punishment.[45] In short, the Philippines campaign at the turn of the twentieth century serves as an example of numerous successful and unsuccessful insurgency and counterinsurgency methods, making it an invaluable case-study. As will be examined, future insurgent leaders, such as Mao Tse-tung, seized upon these historical lessons, tailoring them to their own needs.

The Small Wars Years

Over the decades following the Philippines campaign, America was involved in an extensive series of small engagements, many to secure and stabilize America's overseas corporate interests. The overwhelming majority of these small wars were in Latin America and Asia, where the modern U.S. Marine Corps came of age and earned

[44] Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency*, 135-139.
[45] Ibid., 127.

the nickname as the "State Department's troops."[46] As one author noted about Nicaragua in 1909, "U.S. bankers ran the economy and American officials supervised elections. A Legation Guard of Marines, stationed in the capital city of Managua, kept internal peace."[47] Such was the case due to the overwhelming number of these small wars being engaged for immediate political and commercial interests. These engagements, however, left an indelible mark on the U.S. Marine Corps, so much so that they wrote the first true U.S. military manual, and thus doctrine, on insurgencies and counterinsurgencies. The Marine Corps titled this manual *Small Wars Manual*.[48] Printed in 1940, it was designed to draw "best practices" from the British version of a similar publication titled, *Small Wars*,[49] printed in 1906 as Britain struggled to maintain its empire. Thus, as America dabbled in imperialism in the early 1900s, it sought to glean lessons from other past empires as they too struggled to maintain economic dominance through military force.

But the age of the modern insurgency and counterinsurgency came in the era of China's Mao Tse-tung, after his successful effort to overthrow the Chinese government and install a Communist regime. For the first time a successful insurgent leader who specialized in insurgency as a primary means of warfare wrote a book and defined the requirements of insurgent warfare, albeit an approach focused on rural-based populations. Mao illustrated that although patriotic partisan resistance utilizing guerrilla warfare existed for thousands of years, more was needed to achieve success. As one scholar wrote, "The fundamental difference between patriotic partisan resistance and

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[46] Austin G. Long, *Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence: The U.S. Military and Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008) 4.
[47] Tierney, *Chasing Ghosts*, 179.
[48] U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).
[49] C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London, Harrison and Sons, 1914).

revolutionary guerrilla movements is that the first usually lacks the ideological content that always distinguishes the second."[50] Because of Mao's success and "doctrine" that seized upon the combination of revolutionary fervor and guerrilla warfare, Maoist styled insurgencies began moving to the fore in modern warfare.

What Mao successfully highlighted was that political ideology is an absolute requisite for any successful insurgency campaign. Essentially, it makes the common peasant feel part of a greater and more important whole. He also emphasized that guerrilla warfare tactics, conventional warfare tactics, and political ideology cannot be divorced from one another. They must be synergistic, and these elements of revolutionary warfare must complement each other and be brought to bear at the appropriate times (e.g., in phases). Mao articulated these differences in his landmark book, *On Guerrilla Warfare*. In one such passage, Mao writes:

> What is the guerrilla war of resistance against Japan? It is one aspect of the entire war, which, although alone incapable of producing the decision, attacks the enemy in every quarter, diminishes the extent of area under his control, increases our national strength, and assists our regular armies. It is one of the strategic instruments used to inflict defeat on our enemy. It is the one pure expression of anti-Japanese policy, that is to say, it is military strength organized by the active people and inseparable from them. It is a powerful special weapon with which we resist the Japanese and without which we cannot defeat them.[51]

Following the success of Mao in China, Maoist ideology grew in popularity and spread into many global regions. One of these areas was North Vietnam, where Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap, the most prominent military commander under Ho Chi Minh, employed the strategy and tactics of Mao with tremendous success, first

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[50] Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla*, 27.
[51] Ibid., 50.

against the French and later against the Americans and South Vietnamese. Mirroring Mao's tactics of "space, time, and will,"[52] General Giap writes in almost identical style:

> In the resistance war, guerrilla activity played an extremely important role… this is the way of fighting a revolution. Guerrillas rely on heroic spirit to triumph over modern weapons…now scattering, now regrouping, now wearing out, now exterminating the enemy, they are determined to fight everywhere, so that wherever the enemy goes he is submerged in a sea of armed people who hit back at him, thus undermining his spirit and exhausting his forces.[53]

Like Mao, General Giap understood and articulated the need to mix guerrilla warfare tactics with strong political ideology, which served as its unifying base in garnering sustainable popular support. On this, General Giap writes,

> The People's Army was closely linked with the national liberation war, in the fire of which it was born and grew up… right at the founding of our army, the first armed groups and platoons had their Party groups and branches. The platoons had their political commissars. As soon as they were formed, the regiments had political commissars. The method of Party committee taking the lead and the commander allotting the work also took shape from the very first days. Officers were provided with handbooks, *The Political Commissar's Book of Political Work in the Army.*[54]

As is demonstrated by General Giap's writings, North Vietnam had an organized insurgency and a well articulated revolutionary political platform from which to operate by the time the Americans arrived in Vietnam. Further, the North Vietnamese had already defeated a strong Western power, the French, and strongly resisted Japanese forces during World War II. These experienced made the North Vietnamese some of the most practiced and capable insurgent fighters in the world at that time. To counter the North Vietnamese's considerable capacity, the Americans attempted to rapidly develop equally sophisticated approaches to counterinsurgency.

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[52] A concept frequently discussed and further articulated in Mao Tse-tung's *On Guerrilla Warfare*.
[53] T. N. Greene, *The Guerrilla—And How to Fight Him* (New York: Praeger, 1962) 153.
[54] Ibid., 163-164.

Among the most sophisticated approaches to counterinsurgency were the non-lethal approaches which ran often in parallel to the military's main effort of using overwhelming firepower. Among the earliest nonlethal counterinsurgency approach in Vietnam was the Rural Affairs program, beginning in 1961, heavily focused on the "Strategic Hamlets." The Strategic Hamlets were considered strategically important villages in which to begin the displacement of the Viet Cong (VC) from southern Vietnam. The Strategic Hamlet program drew on an earlier counterinsurgency concept known as the "Oil Stain Theory"[55] which advocated clearing insurgents from a small geographical area, often a village or district, and showing quick yet meaningful results to the local population—such as better local government, enhanced local security, and reconstruction projects that improve the quality of life (e.g. clinics, schools, hospitals, markets, etc.). To provide these results to the local population, the Vietnamese government, in concert with the U.S., developed three overarching goals for the Strategic Hamlets.

> First, the government would tie the people in fortified hamlets into a communications network, providing them with local defense forces to ward off guerrilla raids and stationing reaction forces nearby in case of emergency. Second, the program would strive to unite the people and involve them in governmental affairs. Third, the program would improve living standards.[56]

Despite the historical success which the Strategic Hamlet program was drawn from, such as the British Malayan campaign, bureaucratic inertia and interagency quarrelling spelled its undoing. From the earliest days in Vietnam, several agencies

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[55] The "Oil Stain Theory" is often attributed to French counterinsurgency effort in Morocco. See Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986).

[56] Richard A. Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995) 21.

failed to effectively partner, and in the case of the Strategic Hamlets, State Department and the Defense Department proved to be incompatible. Quite simply, ideological differences were insurmountable due to inflexibility and limited conceptual understanding by numerous agency leads. Richard Hunt, a scholar of Vietnam "Pacification,"[57] writes:

> Two of the main players, The Departments of State and Defense, proved unwilling to yield substantive control over their respective programs in South Vietnam. Furthermore, agencies disagreed as to whether political or military measures deserved an agencies, such as State and AID, argued that programs to win political loyalty and to ameliorate living conditions had to be first because they were prerequisites for establishing local security. Others countered that it was impossible to win the loyalty of people susceptible to communist taxation, terrorism, or levies. These disagreements reflected uncertainty within the administration as to the nature of the Viet Cong threat and the appropriate response.[58]

The Vietnam campaign was further plagued by an inability to agree upon a single strategy, a result of these agencies' differing ideological and technical approaches to counterinsurgency. From the earliest years of America's involvement in Vietnam, continuous conflicts occurred between those advocating a more military focused ("kinetic") approach to displace and demoralize the North Vietnamese guerrillas and regulars while others advocated an approach focused on winning popular support through nonviolent counterinsurgency approaches. Many of these nonviolent approaches involved such activities as partnering with village level counterinsurgent militias, building local infrastructure, and enhancing the governance capacity of local officials. All too often in the minds of military commanders and policy makers, a full understanding of how these two approaches complement one another was never

[57] "Pacification" was the term used for counterinsurgency in Vietnam.
[58] Ibid., 18.

understood, failing to draw lessons from similar historical American experiences including the Civil War, the Indian Wars, the Philippines, and the Small Wars throughout Latin America. In short, lessons were lost, perpetuating the problem of developing a sound counterinsurgency strategy. To illustrate, Hunt writes, "As U.S. Army and Marine Corps units arrived in 1965, pacification became known as the "other war," a patronizing usage that stigmatized the program's status as a noble but failing endeavor that was no longer the main event."[59]

While many modern counterinsurgency practitioners understand that sound counterinsurgency strategies cannot be comprised of an unbalanced proportion of kinetic tactics (raids, bombings, etc.) versus nonviolent tactics (reconstruction, mitigating local population grievances, etc.), many leaders in Vietnam failed to implement such a balanced approach. The series of nonlinear strategies leaned on one solution or the other, whether in pre-1965, focused on an under-resourced pacification approach or the emphasis on kinetic warfare post-1965. The end result was that the strategy debate raged as to whether or not to drop more bombs on North Vietnam or inversely, reduce the violence and focus on infrastructure and local institutional capacity. The debate did not argue for a balance of the two and failed to resolve how best to blend the lethal versus nonlethal approach and seize upon lessons learned and best practices.

Achieving a well-developed and balanced approach required thought on how best to avoid undermining other agencies' efforts. In Vietnam, this challenge was never understood and certainly not overcome by U.S. leadership, with one agency feeding the problems of other agencies due to nonaligned strategies. Because of this, problems

[59] Ibid., 31.

became so deeply cyclical and entrenched that solving them became nearly impossible. Examples of this phenomenon are numerous. Hunt discusses this problem demonstrating how nonaligned strategies perpetuated larger problems for other agencies (e.g., USAID, State Department, South Vietnamese government):

> Military operations of American and South Vietnamese forces also hampered pacification by generating refugees. In the judgment of a major study on war victims, allied operations were the principle cause of refugees in South Vietnam. This occurred in several ways. Artillery and air strikes in preparation for an operation frequently fell on populated areas, forcing people to flee…Chemical defoliation of suspected communist base areas also caused people to move when the drifting spray damaged crops. In the course of operations, friendly forces sometimes attacked inhabited villages in pursuit of the enemy. On other occasions, enemy soldiers hiding in settlements fired at friendly forces hoping to provoke retaliatory fire that might kill or wound or destroy property or crops and thus alienate people.[60]

The Vietnam civil-military model, called CORDS, was established in 1967, in an attempt to unify civil and military organizations to focus on counterinsurgency. For the first time, the nonlethal counterinsurgency organizations were placed under a single manager, more effectively and efficiently utilizing resources. However, by 1967, the nonlethal approach to counterinsurgency was no longer the driving strategy, as the desire for increased military force became dominant. Yet, CORDS achieved substantial gains in pacification, often touted as one of the few success stories from Vietnam. CORDS and the larger nonlethal approach remained merely a subtext to the larger Vietnam conflict. As the architect of the CORDS model noted, "Even after 1967, pacification remained a small tail to the very large conventional military dog."[61]

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[60] Ibid., 39-40.

[61] Robert Komer, quoted in, Ross Coffey, "Revisiting CORDS: The Need for Unity of Effort to Secure Victory in Iraq" in *Military Review* (March-April 2006): 100.

Following Vietnam, America went through a period which avoided counterinsurgency as a primary means of warfare. Essentially, counterinsurgency became a highly specialized form of war kept as far from the front pages as possible. It became the *raison d'être* of such organizations of the U.S. Special Forces and similar organizations. The focus of American foreign policy shifted instead to the Cold War and the emerging nuclear age of potentially large-scale catastrophic warfare. To illustrate, Robert W. Komer, the architect of the Vietnam CORDS program, shifted focus to conventional nuclear naval strategy. Following Vietnam, Komer rarely mentioned counterinsurgency warfare except during individual interviews.

But despite this overwhelming focus on conventional war, particularly nuclear strategy driven by the Cold War mentality, the fact that insurgencies and counterinsurgencies still raged was well known to the foreign policy community. Many of these insurgencies and counterinsurgencies were driven by Cold War maneuvering, including proxy wars, utilizing insurgents and counterinsurgents as proxies in building satellite states and ever-shifting "footprints" of political influence. Examples of such irregular wars are numerous, including but not limited to, Nicaragua, Cuba, Congo, Columbia, and Afghanistan (Soviet era). While these insurgencies and counterinsurgencies did involve U.S. governmental organizations, the levels of support were characterized as much more limited in scale as well as having far less overt involvement than modern examples, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and historic examples of the Philippines and the Indian Wars. Furthermore, most of the Cold War insurgencies and counterinsurgencies were kept limited as the U.S. Government saw little strategic value in advertising their involvement in numerous "hot spots" around the world, serving

only to inflame the already troubled relationship with the Soviets. What was distinctly different between the Cold War periods of irregular conflict and today is that during the Cold War the U.S. sought to have limited U.S. involvement and much greater local leadership involvement. In other words, it was to have a "local face" on the conflict rather than a U.S. face. Today, the U.S. has leading roles in two major simultaneous counterinsurgencies while involved in other smaller-scale efforts, such as antipiracy off the coast of Somalia.

The first major overt American counterinsurgency effort to follow after Vietnam was the campaign to oust the Taliban and al-Qaeda from Afghanistan in 2001. This effort initially began as a classic counterterrorism (CT) campaign as a response to September 11, 2001. The U.S. government had few other options to the CT approach as only a small number of civilian and military personnel were capable of irregular warfare tactics and strategy. This was a symptom of the lengthy Cold War with most resources applied to conventional warfare capability, an approach that refrained from using conventional forces for irregular war. Thus, such organization as the U.S. military's Special Forces (SF) and the CIA's paramilitary remained the few irregular warfare experts within the U.S. government. However, even these groups knew little about the larger aspects of counterinsurgency, such as the nonlethal aspects which Mao Tse-tung expounded upon. The DoD's Civil Affairs Units and civilian agencies such as USAID maintained the institutional knowledge on nonlethal approaches, but were out of practice having performed limited missions on par with Afghanistan and Iraq, yet did have experience from Kosovo and smaller-scale experience from Columbia. Further, despite experience gained in small hot-spots, SF and CIA paramilitary numbers were far too

small for such large geographical areas as Afghanistan to operate meaningfully.[62] Once surgical and often highly violent counter-terrorism (CT) operations concluded, what remained was a dangerous void in governance and security, with no effective indigenous security forces or government in place. With such voids, militants and criminals quickly emerged on the streets causing new and unresolved conflict to reemerge, placing enormous strain on nascent governance structures. Thus, what inevitably began as CT quickly devolved into a much more intensive classic counterinsurgency campaign.

The need for rapid change across the U.S. government to deal with the large-scale counterinsurgency conflicts was a seismic shift in the function and structure of the U.S. government. This restructuring rapidly began drawing in numerous governmental players into counterinsurgency, many which have never had a historical role in such efforts. The restructuring and realignment of responsibilities across the interagency, much as Vietnam did decades before, quickly escalated from being the Defense Department's problem to now deeply involving the Department of State (DoS), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Treasury, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Homeland Security (e.g., Customs and Border Patrol), and others. With these changes, the U.S. entered into the age of what has now become termed by some as the "Whole-of-Government" approach to counterinsurgency.

To illustrate, on January 2009, the first ever U.S. Government-wide counterinsurgency manual was written, which emphasized the point that interagency and

[62] John J. Lumpkin, "CIA, Pentagon Officials Fight Proposal to Merge Covert Forces," in *Army Times,* August 30, 2004, http://www.armytimes.com/legacy/new/1-292925-327723.php (accessed April 15, 2011).

intergovernmental coordination was essential to achieve success in modern counterinsurgency environments. On this new and emerging issue, the manual highlighted the importance of interagency and international strategic coordination, writing:

> …the success of the USG in helping other nations to defeat insurgencies will often be dependent on its proficiency at coordinating all committed agencies and resources (including its own, those of the affected nation, and those of international partners) towards a common objective. The first requirement for the U.S. is that it must synchronize its own agencies in a 'whole-of-government' understanding and approach. The second requirement is that it exercises sufficient diplomatic skill to coax, guide and assist the affected nation through the necessary steps of planning and execution to regain legitimacy and control. In situations where other coalition partners are involved, that diplomatic acumen must extend to maintaining the coalition and ensuring that partner efforts are woven as effectively as possible into the overall COIN strategy.[63]

In many ways, Afghanistan represents a shift in the American way of war. While history has demonstrated many examples of civilian agencies operating in conflict zones alongside the military, more often than not, these roles are outside of open conflict zones. Never before has there been such wide acceptance of noncombatant civilians serving routinely alongside soldiers in open conflict. This shift can be attributed largely to the Vietnam War, where civilians played a large part of the effort. Following the hard lessons from the Vietnam experience, the failure opened the eyes of many policy makers to the fact that a violence-based answer to counterinsurgency is often not the right approach. The result of these lessons was that when the Afghanistan front opened, immediately complex sociological, diplomatic, development, and military science concepts were embraced by international policy makers including the need to reevaluate interagency counterinsurgency approaches (e.g., doctrine and policy) on how the U.S.

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[63] U.S. Government, *U.S. Government*, 47.

and international community was to respond in Afghanistan. A few of the influential manuals that came to fruition include books and sources as *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency*; *FM 3-07, Stability Operations*; the U.S Institute of Peace (USIP), and the U.S. Army Peace Keeping and Stability Operations Institute's (PKSOI) *Guiding Principles for Reconstruction and Stabilization, U.S. Governments Counterinsurgency Guide*, and a host of other journals and websites.

Perhaps the most salient and palpable shift in doctrine and approach to complex counterinsurgencies is demonstrated in the Provincial Reconstruction Team concept, an organizational blend of soldiers and civilian agency personnel merged into one cohesive team. These teams represent and epitomize what has now become known as the "Whole-of-Government" approach to counterinsurgency and stabilization. To understand the Whole-of-Government, we must turn to the literature. This constantly growing body of literature provides evidence of conceptual changes by the military and civilian agencies over time. The most influential documents include the doctrinal and policy making literature covering interagency counterinsurgency approaches, something historically absent with the exception of traces existing in the early stages in Vietnam. One major exception was a handbook written by the United States Operations Mission to Vietnam (USOM), Office of Rural Affairs.[64] USOM's book was drafted for USAID's Rural Affairs effort, but the target audience was both USAID and interagency field officers arriving in theater in 1963 and after. This field guide essentially served as one of the first true interagency handbooks and mirrors much of what is written in today's PRT handbooks. The U.S. Army's Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) drafted the

[64] USAID, Office of Rural Affairs, *USOM Provincial Representative's Guide* (Saigon, Vietnam: USOM, 1963).

Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook,[65] the latest version was heavily amended drawing on lessons learned from the field over the past decade. The handbook illustrates many of the numerous changes undertaken by the U.S. government in the attempt to blend and coordinate numerous organizations within the larger Afghanistan strategic framework.

Perhaps the most salient issues found in this document and others are the distinctly articulated shifts in U.S. Government military doctrine. The handbook, in collaboration with such high profile military doctrines as *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency* and *FM 3-07, Stability Operations*, serves as a formal and highly publicized DoD endorsement embracing the interagency in strategic and tactical decision making. While the DoD remains dominant in most circles in Afghanistan, if for no other reason than their sheer resources, this prointeragency shift by the DoD is largely unprecedented—certainly prior to Vietnam. While the Philippines and the early Vietnam experience provided foreshadowing of interagency cooperation and synchronization, never was the effort more clearly articulated and advocated than in Afghanistan with the formation of the PRTs and the creation of the doctrine that supports these interagency counterinsurgency teams.

In Afghanistan, the PRTs serve a unique role in counterinsurgency. The PRT's primary mandate in Afghanistan is defined in the NATO PRT Handbook:

> The PRT mission statement, which has been incorporated into the ISAF Operational Plan, is as follows: Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) will assist The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified

[65] Department of the Army, *Afghanistan PRT Handbook* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army, 2010).

> area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform (SSR) and reconstruction efforts.[66]

Since the Vietnam CORDS experiment, never have civilian and military counterinsurgency practitioners been so closely intertwined at the operational and tactical levels. However, the core differences with CORDS were that while integration took place spatially, they remained under home agency authority. In other words, USAID answered to the USAID Mission Headquarters in Kabul, State Department answered to the Embassy, and the Department of Defense answered to their own commands. The Vietnam CORDS program intentionally avoided agency stove-piping by having CORDS be a self-contained organization. Never again before or after Vietnam did the military and civilian agencies organize in such a way. Thus, the Afghanistan PRTs remain collectively interagency, but hierarchically differentiated. Unfortunately, this did not mitigate substantial stove-piping, as we will examine later.

The Iraq PRTs are similar in almost all regards with one major exception. The Iraq PRTs operate and are led by the State Department. However, the concept is nearly identical to the Afghanistan PRTs with the exception that again the PRT Team Leader is a State Department Officer. Other differences also exist, such as the approach to metrics, but operationally, the PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan remain very similar.

Nevertheless, The Iraq and Afghanistan PRTs have achieved success in critical areas, such as the blending and aligning of civil and military capabilities into one coherent team. Other benefits include better civil-military strategic and resource

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[66] ISAF, *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook, Edition 4* (Kabul: ISAF, 2009), https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/PRT%20CONFERENCE%202010/PRT%20Handbook%20Edition%204.pdf. (accessed May 1, 2011).

synchronization of stabilization and a more enhanced unified effort, working more in concert rather than at cross-purposes seen frequently before the development of civil-military team concepts pioneered in Vietnam. Yet, as will be examined, major systemic and methodological challenges characterize civil-military teams in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

CHAPTER II

STABILITY OPERATIONS: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

> In an atypical situation that cried out for adaptive solutions, institutional constraints generated a business as usual approach. A bureaucracy tends to adjust a given policy rather than change its structure to reflect a new policy.—Robert Komer, 1972

September 11th fundamentally altered America's perspective on national security. Examining the causes of the attacks and the responses required to diminish the likelihood of future attacks, the Bush Administration undertook a comprehensive national security review. Two significant findings emerged: first, contemporary threats facing the United States could not be mitigated by military force alone and second, it is necessary to stabilize weak or failed states in order to diminish the grievances terrorists and other spoilers use to mobilize support. The 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) acknowledged this new international environment. It recognized changes in the international environment and for the first time, declared fragile and conflict states a threat to U.S. security. Consequently, "stabilizing" these countries became a foreign policy goal. The Obama administration's May 2010 NSS reiterated this threat: "…we must address the underlying political and economic deficits that foster instability, enable radicalization and extremism, and ultimately undermine the ability of governments to manage threats within their borders and to be our partners in addressing common

challenges."[67] Nevertheless, U.S. responses to instable environments continue to be ad hoc and in most cases, ineffective. While there are numerous challenges which limit U.S. effectiveness, a key constraint is the lack of practical tools for civilian and military field personnel conducting stability operations. This paper examines the features of Stability Operations: reasons why bureaucratic, doctrinal, and policy changes have not had an effect at the operational and tactical levels; and how the use of USAID's District Stabilization Framework (DSF) can help practitioners conduct more effectively conduct Stability Operations.

Conducting Effective Stability Operations

The 2002 NSS led to a number of bureaucratic and policy changes. In 2004, the Department of State (DoS) established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). It was charged with coordinating the country's postconflict and stabilization efforts. In 2005, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) created an Office of Military Affairs. Its mission was to serve as USAID's focal point for civilian-military planning and interaction with the DoD and foreign militaries. New policies were also adopted. On November 28, 2005, the Department of Defense published Directive 3000.05. It established stability operations as a core U.S. military mission with the same priority as combat operations. Over the next few years, the DoD also issued new military doctrine (FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency; FM 3-07, Stability Operations). FM 3-07 defines stability operations as the "various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other

[67] The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf (accessed January 17, 2011).

instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe, secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief."[68] Complementing changing military doctrine, in 2009 the U.S. Institute of Peace offered a civilian perspective on Reconstruction and Stabilization operations: "Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction."[69] As with most doctrine, this definition is broadly framed to give units flexibility in dynamic and complex environments. While useful at the strategic level, this broad definition does not help field practitioners beyond the theoretical understanding of counterinsurgency or stabilization. American experience in unstable environments such as Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, the Philippines, Somalia, and Haiti demonstrates the difficulty in effectively conducting Stability Operations.[70] There are numerous reasons for this situation. Although addressing these challenges requires strong leadership and a willingness to take on the formidable task of changing bureaucratic structures and procedures,[71] there are some challenges which could be quickly mitigated.

Since both civilian and military practitioners have little or no stability operations training before they deploy,[72] they rely on their previous experience or narrow technical

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[68] Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Stability Operations Field Manual* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009) viii.

[69]U.S. Institute of Peace, *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction* (Washington D.C.: The U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2009).

[70] Patrick Stewart noted "the United States is still struggling to craft the strategies, mobilize the resources, and align the policy instruments it needs to help reform and reconstruct failing, failed, and war-torn states." Patrick Stewart, "The U.S. Response to Precarious States: Tentative Progress and Remaining Obstacle to Coherence," in *Center for Global Development* (July 2007) http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/14093/ (accessed January 17, 2011)

[71] They include training shortfalls, short deployment cycles, inappropriate programming resources, and misguided 'measures of success. James Derleth and Sloan Mann, "Getting Stability Right," (unpublished article, 2010).

[72] Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *U.S. Civilian Uplift in Afghanistan is Progressing but Some Key Issues Merit Further Examination as Implementation Continues*, (October 26, 2010) 12.

education. As an illustration, the vast majority of USAID Field Program Officers (FPOs) in Afghanistan are either humanitarian or development specialists. This means their previous experience was focused on resolving human development challenges. Military practitioners also rely on their experience and assumptions. For example, many commanders believe proficiency in core combat skills gives soldiers and marines the ability to effectively conduct stability operations. This could not be further from the truth. Training in identifying sources of instability, developing missions and activities to mitigate them, and creating indicators for measuring local stability are just a few of the critical tasks required to conduct effective stability operations. Without the requisite training, military units fall back on what they know best – enemy centric operations. As a brigade staff officer told us, our current doctrine and training requirements do not support stability operations."[73]

Military units trained to work with the population (e.g., Civil Affairs), share many of their civilian counterparts' biases. They believe if they improve the level of development in an area, e.g., provide potable water, educational opportunities, health care, infrastructure, etc., the area will become more stable. Often, one of the first things Civil Affairs soldiers and marines do when they arrive in an area of operations is conduct a "needs assessment."[74] While a traditional "needs assessment" may foster development in a stable environment, research clearly shows this is not the case in unstable environments. This is because conditions in unstable environments, e.g., insecurity,

[73] James Derleth, interview with unnamed U.S. Army Major, Bagram, Afghanistan, October, 2009.
[74] This assessment is called SWEAT-MSO (sewer, water, electricity, academic, trash-medical, security, and other). Department of the Army, *FM 2-24.2*, 7-21.

endemic corruption, a war economy, limited governmental legitimacy, are different from those in stable environments.[75]

It should therefore come as no surprise that mistaken assumptions have led to ineffective programming. When we asked one Field Program Officer (FPO) what stability programming meant to him, he said "good development in an unstable environment." This is patently wrong! Research shows development in an instable environment often fosters more instability if complex local factors are not properly identified. At a recent international aid conference, international practitioners from numerous global aid agencies concluded:

a) Aid seems to be losing, rather than winning, hearts and minds in Afghanistan

b) Development and counterinsurgency policies should acknowledge the potentially destabilizing effects of aid

c) Less is more—too much aid can be destabilizing

d) Donors should differentiate between stabilization and development objectives.[76]

Stability Operations Programming

Effective stability operations programming requires a methodology focused on identifying and diminishing local sources of instability, NOT addressing the perceived "needs" of the population. Most developing countries have a myriad of needs. Extremists/insurgents aren't usually building roads, providing health care, or digging

[75] Edwina Thompson, *Winning 'Hearts and Minds' in Afghanistan: Assessing the Effectiveness of Development Aid in COIN Operations*. Report on Wilton Park Conference. http://www.eisf.eu/resources/library/1004WPCReport.pdf (accessed January 17, 2011).
[76] Ibid., 2-3.

wells. Yet they are able to gain support in the population. What explains this phenomenon? Extremists/insurgents are able to ameliorate the priority grievances of the population because they understand the local community.

Priority grievances are things a significant percentage of locals—not outsiders--identify as important to their community. Examples might include potable water, educational opportunities, infrastructure, security, justice, etc. Priority grievances can be needs. The difference is (1) who identifies the issue – the community, because it is a concern for them or an outside "expert" who assesses the situation based on common development models; and (2) whether a significant percentage of the population identify the issue as a priority. For example, in Afghanistan the Taliban have gained support because they provide Sharia courts to deal with crime and local disputes, both major grievances in the country.[77] As one member of the Afghan Parliament noted: "… people go to them [Taliban] because their justice is quick and seen as more effective than normal justice."[78]

Therefore, to stabilize an area, practitioners must be able to identify, prioritize, and diminish sources of instability (SOI). Sources of instability are usually a small subset of priority grievances. They are SOIs because they (1) directly undermine support for the government, (2) increase support for insurgents, or (3) otherwise disrupt the normal functioning of society. Examples include:

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[77] Alissa J. Rubin, "Expanding Control, Taliban Refresh Stamp on Afghan Justice," in *New York Times,* October 7, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/08/world/asia/08taliban.html (accessed January 17, 2011); Emma Graham-Harrison, "Weak Afghan Justice Bolstering Taliban," in *Reuters,* December 17, 2010, http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-53620620101216 (accessed January 17, 2011).
[78] Karim Talbi, "Shadow Taliban government rules Afghans' lives," in *AFP,* January 26, 2010, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gWl9u3ZojrsONNK4l9tiX5TViJyA (accessed January 17, 2011).

a) In a conflict between two tribes, one tribe allies itself with the insurgents because the rival tribe controls the local government (e.g., resources, patronage, etc.).
b) Insurgents take advantage of a priority grievance (land conflicts) to gain/expand influence in the community by convening a Sharia court to resolve the land conflicts.

This subset must be identified through an analytical process. Noteworthy, field analysis often determines that the actual source of instability is one or more steps removed from a grievance cited by the community. For example, although locals cite water as a problem, analysis might show the underlying source of instability which created the water issue is competition between two tribes over a borehole.

SOIs usually cannot be addressed by a simple infrastructure project, e.g., building a road. However, a road may be a part of the solution. For example, if two tribes do not get along, getting them to cooperate in the process of building a road may help resolve the SOI. Note the infrastructure project is incidental to the problem. It is the process of cooperating to build the road which is important. Another example: if the government's failure to maintain a district irrigation system is being turned into an SOI by insurgent propaganda, a project that simply brings in an outside contractor to fix the canals will not necessarily increase support for the government. Why? If the government cannot maintain the repaired canals, then it will continue to be seen as ineffective, fostering increased popular frustration. Instead, the project should be conducted by the community with government support in order to increase the government and/or society's capability and capacity to maintain the canals in the future. In summary, the goal of stability programming is identifying and targeting the local sources of instability, i.e., the issues

which undermine the government, increase support for extremists/insurgents, and/or disrupt the normal functioning of society. Once an area is stable, practitioners can address needs and priority grievances through traditional development assistance.

The District Stabilization Framework (DSF)

US involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq generated an extensive range of stability operations literature. It generally falls into two categories: broad strategic policy and tactical "best practices" based on an individual or unit's experience. Only a few publications, such as David Kilcullen's "28 Articles"[79] and FM 3.24.2 "Counterinsurgency Tactics,"[80] attempt to provide a coherent set of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for tactical units. These attempts notwithstanding, there is overwhelming need for a simple, standardized methodology to conduct stability operations. While some field personnel have created tools and processes which helped them stabilize an area, most have not been as successful. Recognizing the need for a comprehensive framework which allows civilian and military practitioners to identify local sources of instability, create activities to mitigate them, and measure the effectiveness of the activities in stabilizing the area, the Office of Military Affairs at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) created the District Stabilization Framework (DSF). The DSF is based on the idea that in order to increase stability in an area, practitioners must first understand what is causing instability. This understanding is based on four factors:

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[79] David Kilcullen, "28 Articles: Fundamentals of Company Level Counterinsurgency," in *Joint Information Operations Center*, January 14, 2007, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/info-ops/iosphere/iosphere_summer06_kilcullen.pdf (accessed January 17, 2011).
[80] Department of the Army, *FM 2-24.2*.

1. Instability results when the factors fostering instability overwhelm the ability of the government or society to mitigate these factors
2. A standardized methodology is necessary to identify the sources of instability
3. Local population perceptions must be included when identifying causes of instability
4. Measures of effect (impact) are the only true indicators of success

Through a five-step process (collection and situational awareness, analysis, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation), the District Stabilization Framework identifies sources of instability, designs programs to mitigate them, and measures the effectiveness of the programming in stabilizing an area.

Collection and Situational Awareness

The first step is to gain a stability-focused understanding of environment. Four types of information are required to gain an understanding of local conditions:

- operational[81]
- cultural (major groups, their interests, conflict resolution mechanisms, traditional authorities, limits to their power, how spoilers leverage these factors)

[81] A useful tool to collect operational information is the PMESII/ASCOPE framework. PMESII/ASCOPE is a doctrinal framework traditionally used by the military to identify the civil components in an area of operations. PMESII stands for Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, and Information. ASCOPE is a similar framework which stands for Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People and Events. In contrast to traditional PMESII/ASCOPE which is enemy focused, a Stability Operations PMESII/ASCOPE collects and organizes factors based on their relevance to local stability. As an example, a traditional PMESII/ASCOPE would list the host nation security forces in an AO. A stability focused PMESII/ASCOPE not only lists that information, but also whether the security forces from the area has local support etc.

- instability and stability factors (identifying the grievances and resiliencies of the local population, key local actors, their ability to foster stability or foment instability, and events which could foster in/stability
- local perceptions [82]

Analysis

As anyone who has been to a doctor knows, until the malady is diagnosed, the doctor cannot prescribe an effective treatment. Similarly, to conduct effective stability operations, we need to understand what is causing instability! The analysis phase of the DSF compiles the four streams of information gathered in the collection phase and analyzes them to identify and prioritize the local sources of instability. This is accomplished through a series of worksheets. Practitioners not only identify the population's priority grievances, but more importantly, whether and how these grievances are sources of instability, i.e., do they undermine support for the government, increased

[82] One method to gather local perceptions is to use the USAID's Tactical Conflict Survey (TCS). It has four questions: *"Have there been changes in the village population in the last year?" WHY? "What are the most important problems facing the village?" WHY? "Who do you believe can solve your problems?" WHY? "What should be done first to help the village?" WHY?* These four questions elicit information which helps field practitioners identify key grievances. This helps the counterinsurgent determine the "doors" which insurgents use to establish themselves as "legitimate" within a local community. The counterinsurgent must locate and close these entry points in order to achieve stability and improve the host nation government's legitimacy in the eyes of the population. The TCS avoids the problems of other surveys by not asking the local population what they "want or need." Wants and needs are endless and exist in both stable and unstable environments. It also avoids the cultural response bias (many cultures consider it rude to answer "no") to "yes or no" questions. When the TCS is asked over time, the accumulated data provides standardized and measureable changes in perceptions. The "Why" question is crucial as it provides context. As an illustration, during a DSF field trial in Helmand Province, the British Brigade Commander was spending 70% of his time meeting elders because his predecessor told him this was where things "got done." In one region, the population didn't identify tribal elders as people who could solve their problems (TCS Question #3). The Commander ordered his staff to find out why people didn't believe their traditional leaders could solve their problems. By analyzing the "Why" responses, the staff discovered the Taliban had assassinated senior tribal leaders. Thus the shura leadership consisted of the sons of the elders who were young and inexperienced and did not have the same legitimacy as their predecessors. This information would not have been obtained without the TCS. As FM 3-24 "Counter-Insurgency" notes, "*effective civil-military programming starts with 'situational awareness' based upon facts and an understanding of local perceptions*."

support for insurgents, or undermine the normal functioning of society. This process is very different from identifying impediments to development or locating enemy forces.

Design

After identifying the sources of instability, the next step in the DSF process is to design activities to mitigate them. This is accomplished through a series of "filters." The first filter is "Stability Fundamentals." This means an activity must **measurably**:

1. Increase support for the government
2. Decrease support for spoilers
3. Increase institutional and/or the community's ability to solve societal problems

If a proposed activity fulfills these three "Stabilization Fundamentals," the next filter "Stabilization Principles" is applied.[83] These are widely accepted best practices for designing international programs. They include local ownership, capacity building, sustainability, selectivity, assessment, results, partnership, flexibility, and accountability. The goal of the design phase is to create effective projects which mitigate local sources of instability. Too often practitioners implement "feel good" projects or even worse, projects to show they did "something" during their deployment. Unless activities are designed to mitigate sources of instability, at best they will have no effect on stability and at worse, they will increase instability.

[83] "Stabilization Principles" was coined by the former USAID Administrator, Andrew Natsios. See Andrew Natsios, "The Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development," in *Parameters* 35, (Autumn, 2005): 4-20.

Implementation

Even if practitioners identify the local sources of instability and design appropriate mitigating activities, how the activities are implemented plays a crucial role in determining whether an activity will foster stability. For example, giving projects to one faction in a community will cause resentment from another, fostering instability. Funneling money through the wrong contractors or corrupt officials may contribute to instability.[84] Large influxes of cash can cause inflation and corruption, which hurt the poor. The lure of inflated salaries may also draw farmers from their farms, teachers from schools, and doctors from clinics—leading to more instability when the projects end.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To determine their effectiveness in stabilizing an area, practitioners must be able to not only measure whether their activities were successful, but also whether their activities stabilized the area. Therefore, it is necessary to track three levels of evaluation: Measure of Performance (MOP), Measure of Effect, (MOE) and Overall Stability.

- MOP identifies whether activities have been completed. For example, if the objective was to "increase police support in the community," an activity might include police training. The MOP for this activity would be "police trained." Note this simply determines if an activity has been completed, not whether the police have more support in the community.

[84] Institutions including the military, NGOs, and development agencies often have "black lists" of corrupt officials and organizations. Also, established and trusted local partners understand which individuals, organizations, and businesses should be avoided when implementing stabilization or development activities. Practitioners will spend considerable time uncovering this information, which evolves constantly over time.

- MOE assesses whether the stability program objective(s) has been achieved Continuing the police example, an MOE might be more information provided to the police by the population.
- Overall Stability – helps determine whether the net effect of ALL activities has improved stability in the area. A basket of standardized stability-focused indicators—which can be augmented by a few context area specific indicators—gives practitioners a good idea if an area is becoming more or less stable. DSF stability indicators currently being used in Afghanistan include:
    1. Civilian Night Road Movement
    2. Government Legitimacy
    3. Population Citing Security as an Issue
    4. Population Movement from Insecurity
    5. Enemy Initiated Attacks on Government Security Forces
    6. Civilian Casualties
    7. Acts of Intimidation Against Government Officials

Note that the number of indicators is not as important as what is being evaluated.[85] Since the support of the population is the goal for both the government and insurgent forces in a Stability Operation, the metrics must focus on (1) whether the population believes stability is improving, (2) if their actions reflect their perceptions, and (3) if insurgents are operating in the area.

[85] David Kilcullen, *Measuring Progress in Afghanistan* (U.S. Military Manuscript, Kabul, 2009), 7.

Criticism of District Stabilization Framework

Critics of the DSF believe it does not improve the effectiveness of stability operations because:

a) It is difficult to collect local perceptions

b) It does not provide a better understanding of the local environment than traditional tools

c) It takes too much time to collect, analyze and disseminate DSF data

d) The DSF methodology cannot be properly executed in violent environments

e) It is not linked to a higher level campaign plan and its measures of progress

Let us examine these criticisms. First, the DSF is too difficult to implement. Common complaints include: "interlocutor fatigue" (too much use of the Tactical Conflict Survey [TCS] within a small population without doing anything to address the sources of instability) and soldiers cannot gather accurate information from the population because they will tell armed soldiers "what they want to hear." The first issue is the result of a lack of training. Survey saturation is not a weakness of the DSF methodology; it is a shortcoming of those applying it. As for soldiers not being able to gather accurate information from locals, two small trials in southern Afghanistan using soldiers, foreign nationals, and local NGOs to conduct the TCS found no statistical difference in the responses gathered by each group.[86]

Another criticism is that the DSF does not provide a better understanding of the local environment than traditional tools and processes. The difference between the DSF

[86] This might be unique to Afghanistan—thirty years of instability have acclimatized the population to seeing soldiers. However, even if there was a bias against soldiers in parts of the world, civilian foreign nationals or local nationals could implement the TCS.

and traditional tools is the latter are either focused on identifying the "needs" of the population or on identifying the enemy. In other words, they are not focused on identifying and diminishing sources of instability. The DSF gives practitioners an analytical process, TTPs to implement it, and metrics to evaluate their effectiveness. Using the DSF in the Nawa District of Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 1st Battalion 5th Marines in 2009 learned the lack of cell phone coverage was one of the local population's principal grievances. Following up with the "why" question of the Tactical Conflict Survey, the unit discovered cell phone coverage fostered a sense of stability because it allowed people to quickly find out about the security situation in neighboring areas and/or if attacks had injured family members. Based on this information, the battalion and its ANSF partners started providing security for the local cell phone towers. Improving the ability of the population to communicate led to an increase in the number of tips about IEDs and insurgent movement. Even more significantly, it increased the number of people who believed the area was stable. Battalion Commander LTC Bill McCollough noted "This is something we had never thought about, as we considered phones a luxury. Without using DSF…we would never have known about this concern, understood why it was a concern, or done anything about it."[87]

Third Battalion 509th Infantry in East Paktika, Afghanistan also used the DSF to identify sources of instability. According to the Commander of Bravo Company, the DSF process "allowed me to streamline operations…and prioritized where to focus my efforts with what resources I had and it ensured some things that are not quick fixes (most things actually) were not forgotten." The battalion's Operations Officer noted the DSF allowed

[87] Bill McCollough, Email message to James Derleth, May, 2010.

"all of our platoon leaders, staffs, company commanders, battalion staff and battalion commander to have a good idea of the sources of instability in East Paktika. The simplicity, scalability and clarity of the system [DSF] are unmatched." [88] Because of the utility of the framework, for the first time the 509th was able to effectively target the identified and prioritized sources of instability in their AO.

Another concern is the District Stabilization Framework takes too long to implement. Practitioners have only a limited time in theater and there is a natural inclination to do as much as possible during their deployment. However, implementing projects without first indentifying sources of instability can foster the very instability practitioners were sent to diminish. Army Field Manual 2.0 "Intelligence" stresses "intelligence drives operations." This is true for both lethal and nonlethal operations. If practitioners have been educated and trained in the DSF, they can quickly identify local SOIs. Using the DSF during their deployment in Afghanistan, the British 52 Brigade was able to identify the key sources of instability—which differed throughout the AO—within a month of their arrival in theater.

Targeting these SOIs, 52 Brigade was able to see the effects of their activities to diminish them, e.g., increasing support for the Afghan Government and decreasing support for insurgents, within three months. This improvement in stability was identified both qualitatively—through changes in people's perceptions garnered with the Tactical Conflict Survey and quantitatively (people moving back to their villages, more civilian

[88] Patrick Altenburg, 3/509th, Email message to James Derleth, May, 2010.

road movement, decreased security incidents, etc.)[89] While a paucity of data makes it difficult to discern whether this was causation or correlation, no other unit we are aware of can show any direct link between identifying sources of instability, targeting them, and measuring effect.

Critics of the DSF also believe practitioners cannot employ the methodology in very violent environments where insurgents have a strong foothold and are thus still capable of attacking and intimidating the local population. While traditional collection methods may need to be discarded, e.g., such as standing out in the open conducting a conversation with a farmer, there are still numerous ways in which to collect public perceptions. One is simply to query returning soldiers conducting routine patrols and who converse with the local population. Practitioners may also seek out local NGOs, IOs and various other local partners to gather their perspectives on the drivers of instability in the area. In short, creativity and flexibility are required for collecting local perceptions in unstable environments.

Another criticism of the DSF is that while it might measure the effectiveness of activities in fostering local stability, the DSF is not linked to higher level strategy and measures of effect (MOE). Noteworthy, the vast majority of higher level measures are not MOE, but rather measures of performance (MOP), also referred to as outputs. As noted above, MOPs do not measure whether an area is getting more stable, they simply indicate if an activity has been implemented. The answer to the larger question of how to link local activities to a higher level strategy is in the creation of a flexible strategy which

[89] Richard Wardlaw, "52 BDE's use of TCAPF: A Presentation," Quantico, VA: October 2008. LTC Wardlaw was in charge of Reconstruction and Stabilization for the British 52 Brigade during their Nov 2007 – April 2008 deployment in Afghanistan.

provides a broad outline rather than detailed programmatic goals and their corresponding metrics. Units can then prioritize their activities based on the elements of the strategy which are relevant to their area of operations instead of being forced to conduct activities across a broad spectrum (see next paragraph). The Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) states decisions should be based on "top-down guidance and bottom up refinement." In Afghanistan, there has been little or no bottom up refinement. One reason for this phenomenon is the lack of a common interagency methodology which identifies local causes of instability for incorporation into national level strategies. The DSF provides this capability.

A related issue is the importance of having stability focused metrics rather than a plethora of irrelevant output indicators. In 2009, S/CRS led a process to create an "Integrated Civilian-Military Support Plan for Afghanistan." It includes eleven "Transformative Effects" which, if attained, suggest Afghanistan will be stable. To measure progress along the way, each Transformative Effect has a series of measurable "Main Efforts" (95 in total) at the community, province, and national level."[90] If there are ninety-five main efforts, in reality there is no main effort. In addition to taking a significant amount of staff time and field resources to simply gather the requisite data, more importantly, most of the main efforts (i.e., focus of effort) are output indicators (Measures of Performance) and do not measure whether an area is more stable. There are two main reasons for this situation. First, many people do not understand the difference between impact (Measure of Effect) and output measures. Second, sources of instability

[90] Karl W. Eikenberry and Stanley A. McChrystal, *United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan* (Kabul: U.S. Government, 2010) http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/0908eikenberryandmcchrystal.pdf (accessed January 17, 2011.

are local.[91] None of the higher level plans for stability operations we examined attempted to identify local sources of instability before developing Lines of Operations or stability MOEs.[92] Consequently, the Lines of Effort (LOE) determine the sources of instability rather than the sources of instability determining the LOEs. This is a recurring problem as plans and indicators are often created either by people who do not understand stability operations or by policy-makers, leaders, or practitioners who conflate their values and experiences with what locals consider important.

Most criticism of the DSF comes from those who have not been trained in the DSF or who tried to implement it from Power Point presentations. While the DSF is not a "silver bullet," it is the only tool which systematically collects the perceptions of the population, integrates them into a comprehensive sources of instability analysis, designs activities based on this analysis, and measures the effect of the activities in both diminishing the SOIs and stabilizing the area.

Benefits of DSF

The District Stabilization Framework was designed by practitioners to help practitioners mitigate challenges to effectively conducting stability operations. Consequently, the use of the DSF improves the ability of practitioners to conduct stability operations by:

1) Enabling practitioners to distinguish between Needs, Priority Grievances, and Sources of Instability

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[91] Tip O'Neill, a former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, would certainly agree. He used to note "All politics are local."

[92] For example, *the U.S. Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan* notes the mission of tactical District Support Teams is "primarily execution focused." 30.

2) Fostering Unity of Effort – through its focus on identifying and mitigating the sources of instability, the DSF provides all actors in an area a common view of sources of instability

3) Improving programming – because it provides a common view of the sources of instability, the DSF helps practitioners prioritize activities based on their relevance to stabilizing an area rather than the practitioners' specific "cylinder of excellence"

4) Measuring stability – since the DSF creates a baseline using standardized, population-centric evaluation criterion, it allows practitioners to assess their progress in stabilizing an area.

5) Improving continuity -- since the typical stability operation lasts ten to fifteen years, it is crucial to have a process which fosters continuity between deployments. Because the DSF identifies the sources of instability and the effectiveness of programming to diminish them, it prevents practitioners from "reinventing the wheel"

6) Empowering field personnel – by using an analytical process to identify the local sources of instability, DSF data give practitioners an opportunity to influence higher-level planning and decision-making

7) Reducing staff time and resources devoted to planning – DSF allows the staff to focus on what is really important—stabilizing an area, rather than conducting fruitless operations and/or implementing ineffective projects

8) Improving strategic communications – because the DSF identifies the issues which matter most to the population, it helps identify Strategic Communication themes

which resonate with the population. What better IO message than "we understand your grievances and here is what we're doing to address them."[93]

Overall, the DSF improves the effectiveness of stability operations because it is based on knowledge of the local environment rather than dubious assumptions.

Summary

As with any theory or doctrine, the District Stabilization Framework does not tell field personnel how to conduct stability operations in specific situations. That is the responsibility of field personnel. However, it does help overcome the natural tendency of practitioners to rely on their own experience, which may or may not be relevant in the current environment. In addition, implementing a detailed, population-centric process greatly improves the chances of successfully stabilizing an area. This is because it is the local population which directly experiences instability and will continue to live in the area long after foreigners depart.

To stabilize an area, two simultaneous processes must occur. First, the sources of instability must be identified and mitigated. Second, societal and/or governmental capability and capacity to mitigate future sources of instability must be fostered. Simply stated, practitioners must diminish the sources of instability while building up the forces of stability. This process is the underlying foundation of the District Stabilization

[93] Mitigating grievances in modern counterinsurgency involves communicating with the local population more effectively than the insurgents. As such, achieving support from the local population involves not only implementing projects that mitigate local grievances but also informing the population that these projects were provided by the host nation government and supporting organizations (e.g., stabilization practitioners). The DSF permits practitioners to understand the grievances and sources of instability, prioritize them, and effectively plan for the mitigation of these sources of instability. Following implementation of projects, practitioners can demonstrate attribution of the projects and thereby inform the population who implemented these projects. This helps the host government achieve greater legitimacy as well as take legitimacy from insurgent organizations that frequently claim projects they did not implement.

Framework. Although providing guidance for his forces in Afghanistan, the words of the Commander of International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) apply anywhere in the world: "understand the local grievances and problems that drive instability and take action to redress them."[94] The DSF gives practitioners a tool to accomplish this mission.

[94]Stanley A. McChrystal, "ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance," August 25, 2009, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/counterinsurgency_guidance.pdf (accessed January 17, 2011).

CHAPTER III

CIVIL-MILITARY TEAMS:

STILL WAITING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

> "Insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results"—Narcotics Anonymous, 1981

Traditionally, threats to U.S. National Security were defined primarily by potential adversaries' military capabilities. September 11th fundamentally altered that perspective. Examining the causes of the attacks and the responses required to diminish the likelihood of future attacks, the Bush Administration undertook a comprehensive national security review. Two significant findings emerged: first, contemporary threats facing the United States cannot be mitigated by military force alone and second, it is necessary to stabilize weak or failed states in order to diminish the grievances terrorists and other spoilers use to mobilize support. The 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) acknowledged this new international environment. For the first time, fragile states in conflict were identified as potential threats to national security. Consequently, "stabilizing"[95] these countries became a foreign policy goal. The Obama administration's May 2010 NSS reiterated this view: "…we must address the underlying political and

[95] Stability is the process "by which the underlying tensions that might lead to a resurgence in violence and a breakdown in law and order are managed and reduced, while efforts are made to support the preconditions for long-term development." See Department of the Army, *FM 3-07, The U.S. Army Stability Operations*.

economic deficits that foster instability, enable radicalization and extremism, and ultimately undermine the ability of governments to manage threats within their borders and to be our partners in addressing common challenges."[96]

The 2002 NSS led to a number of bureaucratic and policy changes. In 2004, the Department of State (DoS) established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). It was charged with "leading U.S. Government planning to help societies transition from conflict or civil strife to a sustainable peace, democracy and market economies." In 2005, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) created an Office of Military Affairs. Its mission was to serve as USAID's focal point for civilian-military planning and interaction with the DoD and foreign militaries. New policies were also adopted. In 2005 the Department of Defense published Directive 3000.05. It established stability operations as a core U.S. military mission with the same priority as combat operations.

While taking steps in the right direction, the Bush Administration realized without integrating the civil and military elements of national power, it could not successfully mitigate the amorphous, cross-bureaucracy threats to U.S. security. To that end, it issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD) in 2005. This Directive designated S/CRS as the lead agency for "coordination, planning, and implementation for reconstruction and stabilization assistance for foreign states and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife."[97] These efforts notwithstanding, there is still a lack of coordination and integration across departments and agencies: "the sad reality is

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[96] The White House, *National Security Strategy*.
[97] The White House, *National Security Presidential Directive 44*, http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-44.html (accessed March 7, 2011).

that collectively, these departments and agencies represent merely a hodgepodge of enterprises that function mostly autonomously—or at least with little shared strategic directions."[98]

The 2010 NSS noted that the U.S. must "more effectively ensure the alignment of resources with our national security strategy, adapting the education and training of national security professionals to equip them to meet modern challenges, reviewing authorities and mechanisms to implement and coordinate assistance programs, and other policies and programs that strengthen coordination."[99]

Civilian-Military Teams in Vietnam (CORDS)

Although the attention paid to integrating civilian and military capabilities in support of foreign policy goals has been amplified since 9-11, it is not a new phenomenon. Civ-mil teams have been deployed numerous times over the years. Perhaps the most noted is the CORDS program in Vietnam was CORDS (Civilian Operations and Revolutionary-later Rural- Development Support)

This was the first time the United States Government (USG) attempted to combine all of the diverse counterinsurgency activities run by the military, USAID and the CIA in one program. Under CORDS, USAID personnel worked in conjunction with American and South Vietnamese military and CIA personnel throughout the country,

[98] Eric Jorgensen, "Greater than the Sum of Its Parts: Putting the Inter into Interagency*,"* in *Prism 2*, no.2 (2011): *30.*
[99] The White House, *National Security Strategy*.

establishing up programs designed to win popular support for the South Vietnamese government and to diminish support for the Viet Cong.[100]

CORDS was designed and led by Robert Komer. He was personally selected by President Johnson because of his strong personality—his nickname was "Blow Torch Bob," and his ability to overcome administrative obstacles. Identifying bureaucratic stovepipes as a major impediment to an integrated civ-mil effort, Komer attempted to formally merge various government entities into a single organizational structure. The rationale: "we realistically concluded no one of these [individual agency] plans—relatively inefficient and wasteful in the chaotic, corrupted Vietnamese wartime context—could be decisive. But together they could hope to have a major cumulative effect."[101] CORDS' managers were to supervise the formulation and execution of all plans, policies and programs, military and civilian, which supported the South Vietnamese government's development and related programs.[102] As one author noted, "Komer's handiwork ensured him sizable authority not only over seven civilian agencies, but he also had considerable say in the mobilization of military resources to support the President's pacification commitment."[103]

This novel structure notwithstanding, bureaucratic rivalries continued to limit CORDS' effectiveness. Civilian and military organizations did not want to dedicate their resources to an interagency program. One observer compared CORDS to a beggar:

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[100] Marc Leepson, "The Heart and Mind of USAID's Vietnam Mission," in *American Foreign Service Association*. http://www.fsjournal.org/apr00/leepson.cfm (accessed March 7, 2011).
[101] Robert Komer, quoted in Coffey "Revisiting CORDS," 96.
[102] James Embrey, "Unity of Effort in Counterinsurgency: Historical Perspectives on the CORDS Program in Vietnam, 1965-1970" (Peace Keeping and Stability Operations Institute, September 17, 2008) 12.
[103] Frank L. Jones, "Blowtorch: Robert Komer and the Making of Vietnam Pacification Policy," in *Parameters* (Autumn 2005): 106.

"CORDS, as such, is an organization in name only. It has no assets of its own; it has no authority; it can't buy or sell anything. Everything we did out there in the administrative operation of CORDS was done through some agency. CORDS had to obtain supplies, equipment, and personnel through other agencies, which had an understandable reluctance to provide another organization with funds for which they were accountable."[104]

The effectiveness of the CORDS program was also limited by its inability to measure the effect of its activities. Although the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES)[105] attempted to quantify and qualify the effectiveness of programs in "pacifying" an area, it was considered controversial and too complicated. Another problem was that the HES primarily measured preidentified development indicators and security, not whether popular support for the government was increasing.[106] This approach did not provide an opportunity for local input. Consequently, relatively few practitioners used the HES metrics to select their programming activities.

As one CORDS veteran wrote, "The intent of these [HES] reports was good, but like so many good bureaucratic intentions, the idea was weakest at the point of practical application. I saw DSA's [District Senior Advisors] give the reports they should have

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[104] Hunt, *Pacification*, 279.

[105] The HES used a Hamlet Evaluation Worksheet (HEW) to create an assessment for each hamlet. "The 18-question HEW and the 10-question Hamlet Problem document required the DSA to select from pre-determined multiple choice ratings in order to arrive at an overall "score" for a hamlet, based upon his assessment of "ground truth" of the relevant conditions in the hamlet that month. In the case of the HEW, DSAs had to assign a rating from "A" (best) to "E" (worst) to each of the 18 indicators. These ratings were then converted into a numerical scale (A = 5, E = 1; VC-controlled hamlets received "0" ratings) allowing them to be summed and averaged to reach an overall score for each hamlet. See David Gayvert, "Teaching New Dogs Old Tricks: Can the Hamlet Evaluation System Inform the Search for Metrics in Afghanistan?," in *Small Wars Journal*, http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/531-gayvert.pdf (accessed April 4, 2011). Note: The HES focused on pre-determined questions rather than open-ended questions allowing locals to provide feedback. Such an approach places the onus of local knowledge on the field worker rather than garnering information from the locals who understand local reality.

[106] Ambassador David Passage, quoted in Coffey, "Revisiting CORDS," 32.

filled out themselves to their less informed and less experienced subordinates. Sometimes the instructions would be to just fill in the blanks with anything that seemed reasonable. Meeting the deadline for submission of the report was the important thing, not accuracy. Often reports on hamlets were filled in when the hamlet had never been seen by the DSA or any of his team members. Instead of a firsthand look, the overworked DSA might take the word or opinion of a local Vietnamese official about the situation in some remote hamlet. While the Vietnamese colleague might in fact know of the situation in that hamlet, his motives in giving an opinion might have been viewed with some skepticism."[107]

Closely linked to inappropriate metrics was the lack of a common interagency planning and assessment framework. In other words, the lack of a standardized, tactical framework which would help field practitioners identify local sources of instability (SOI), develop programming to mitigate them, and measure the effectiveness of the programs in stabilizing the area. Although the HES attempted to assess the effectiveness of CORDS' programming, since its indicators were not linked to local SOIs, they did not measure whether an area was becoming more stable.

As an illustration, if a new school was built, this would be considered a measure of success. However, if the Viet Cong were gaining support in an area because of corrupt local officials, a new school would not foster sustainable local stability. In general the CORDS program operated under the principle "if you do good things, good things will happen." The lack of a standardized, stability focused planning and assessment framework resulted in the misapplication of limited resources and continuing instability.

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[107] David Donovan, *Once a Warrior King: Memories of an Officer in Vietnam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985) 157-158.

The CORDS' centralized management system allowed for the more efficient use of multiagency resources and personnel than in previous civ-mil operations. Consequently, and despite an overwhelming focus on lethal operations by the military, CORDS was able to "pacify" various parts of the country.[108] This success notwithstanding, the overall effectiveness of CORDS as a model for civ-mil integration was limited by bureaucratic stovepipes, metrics focused on output, and the lack of an assessment methodology which identified and targeted local sources of instability.

Civilian-Military Teams Today

The current iteration of civilian-military teams is the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq. The deployment of PRTs represents a continuing belief successful stability operations require integrated civ-mil teams. First deployed in Afghanistan in 2002, PRTs are small "interim civil-military organizations designed to operate in semi-permissive environments following open hostilities. The PRT is intended to improve stability in a given area by helping build the host nation's capacity; reinforcing the host nation's legitimacy and effectiveness; and bolstering that the host nation can provide security to its citizens and deliver essential government services."[109]

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[108] "Pacification… emerged from the counterinsurgency doctrine of the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was designed to focus on conflicts at the low end of the spectrum of warfare, insurgencies or wars of national liberation. Counterinsurgency melded a wide array of civil and military programs to defeat revolutionary insurgent movements in developing nations. Civilian programs included economic development, land reform, and broader participation in politics. Military programs included working with the police to improve security and the creation of mobile, lightly armed ground forces to conduct anti-insurgent operations. See Hunt, *Pacification*, 2-3.

[109] Department of the Army, *Afghanistan*, 1 and Department of the Army, *Iraq PRT Handbook* (Ft. Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2010) 1.

While PRTs have had some success,[110] overall they have not fostered effective civil-military integration or stabilized the areas where they operate. The reasons would be familiar to a CORDS' District Advisors working in Vietnam thirty-five years ago: an inability to overcome bureaucratic interests, an emphasis on measuring output rather than effect, and not using a standardized stability assessment and planning framework to link and sync the civilian and military activities.[111] The PRT handbook notes: "a PRT stabilizes an area through its integrated civilian-military focus. It combines the diplomatic, military, and developmental components of the various agencies involved in the stabilization and reconstruction effort."[112] However, their effectiveness has suffered from personality differences, agency cultures, agency funding and personnel imbalances, and differing agency objectives and timelines.[113] As one Iraq PRT veteran wrote, "While the State Department was the lead Federal agency for reconstruction and stabilization, the BCTs we were embedded with had their own separate agendas."[114]

In terms of measuring the effect, PRTs have yet to field an objective, standardized framework to assess whether their activities are stabilizing an area. While the HES was controversial, at least it was a consistent framework which attempted to measure overall

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[110] They include building support for the U.S.-led coalition and building respect for the Afghan government, providing election support, school construction, disarmament, and mediating factional conflicts. See Michael McNerney, "Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or Muddle?," in *Parameters* (Winter 2005-2006): 32.

[111] Recognizing this shortcoming, S/CRS and the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation at USAID developed "The Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework" (ICAF). Its purpose is to "help people from different U.S. government departments and agencies work together to reach a shared understanding of a country's conflict dynamics and consensus on potential entry points for additional U.S. government efforts." While useful at a national or regional level, it doesn't identify local conflict dynamics, doesn't integrate the national conflict dynamics into a comprehensive planning framework, or include standardized stability indicators. Therefore, its value to field practitioners is limited.

[112] Department of the Army, *Iraq PRT,* 5 and *Afghanistan PRT*, 3.

[113]Princeton University, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and Recommendations* (Academic, Princeton: Woodrow Wilson School, January 2008).

[114] Blake Stone, "Blind Ambition: Lessons Learned and Not Learned in an Embedded PRT," in *PRISM*, no. 4 (September 2010): 154.

"effect."[115] In contrast, PRT metrics are based on measuring output along predetermined "Lines of Activity" (LOA).[116] Ironically, the PRT Handbook stresses the importance of measuring effect rather than simply recording the number of projects.[117] Nevertheless, as with the HES, PRT metrics do not identify the local sources of instability from the perspective of the population or include all the relevant information from local practitioners. As an illustration, the system used to measure PRT effectiveness in Iraq (The Maturity Model); focused on measuring increases in civil capacity, not whether stability was increasing. In other words, it did not measure whether the government was legitimate or if local support for insurgents was decreasing. Other problems were a focus on the provincial level and an inability to change irrelevant metrics dictated by Bagdad.

Realizing these shortcomings, in December 2009, the U.S. Embassy in Iraq issued new guidance mandating PRTs focus on "outcomes" rather than merely improving Iraqi provincial government capacity as assessed by the Maturity Model. The policy guidance noted: "The PRT mission in each province must be shaped not by a single analytical tool but by the JCP [Civ-mil Joint Common Plan], existing security situation, Iraqi willingness to cooperate, PRT resources, and other events on the ground in each

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[115] For example, HES sought to determine how development activities were contributing to overall security of a respective hamlet.

[116] As an example, the Iraq PRT maturity model focused on assessing the provinces in five areas: governance, political development, economic development, political reconciliation, and rule of law. These five areas were directed by the Joint Common Plan. See Department of the Army, *Iraq PRT*, 89.

[117] For the PRT, outputs are only important in so much as they increase stability. As with any diplomatic, defense, or development institution, there is a danger that PRTs may fall prey to pressure to deliver immediate but inappropriate proxy indicators of progress, including number of projects completed or quantity of funds expended. What is not so clear is some indicators that are considered effects within the development community are really only outputs for a PRT. For example, the development community may consider an increase in literacy or a decrease in child mortality to be an effect . See, Department of the Army, *Afghanistan PRT*, 9.

province."[118] Although a step forward, the guidance was too broad and subjective, did not require Iraqi input in the development of indicators, focused on USG priorities, and lacked standardized indicators.

The lack of a standardized stability baseline created by identifying local sources of instability rather than dictates from above continues to foster ad hoc planning and programming. More importantly, it prevents civ-mil teams from measuring whether or not stability is increasing. This situation is amplified by the structure of PRTs. While it was hoped an interagency civ-mil organization would foster integrate programming, in most cases this hope has been negated by home agency cultures, time horizons, and perspectives.

Without a common understanding of the local sources of instability, civ-mil teams will continue to replicate past failures. These recurring challenges point to the need for a standardized, tactical, interagency framework to identify local sources of instability, develop programming to mitigate them, and measure the effectiveness of the programs in stabilizing the area.

The District Stability Framework

Recognizing the need for a standardized, comprehensive methodology to foster effective civ-mil operations, USAID's Office of Military Affairs led an effort to overcome this challenge. The result was the District Stability Framework (DSF). The DSF helps civilian and military personnel identify and target local causes of instability. Utilizing significant elements of USAID's Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning

[118] Department of the Army, *Iraq PRT*, 87.

Framework (TCAPF) and military planning tools such as ASCOPE[119] and PMESII,[120] the DSF is an adaptive tool which can be used in unstable environments where civ-mil teams might be deployed.

The District Stability Framework: Four Phases

The DSF offers a common platform for collaboration and joint planning, within and across the interagency. It provides a nuanced understanding of the environment through the utilization of four lenses (operational, cultural, popular perceptions, and the dynamics of stability and instability) to gain population-centric situational awareness. This information drives the analysis phase which identifies local sources of instability. Once identified, the design phase develops activities to diminish the sources of instability. Perhaps most significantly, the DSF measures the impact of activities in stabilizing an area, not simply the number of dollars spent or number of projects completed. This allows for the real-time monitoring and evaluation of activities to determine whether they should be continued, ended, or increased.

The DSF methodology has three significant advantages: First, it focuses on identifying and prioritizing local sources of instability. Second, it gives practitioners the ability to continually monitor and measure activities, allowing them to be adjusted as required. Third, the DSF has standardized stability impact indicators which assess overall stability trends with qualitative and quantitative measures. These features are unique to

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[119] ASCOPE (**A**reas, **S**tructures, **C**apabilities, **O**rganizations, **P**eople, **E**vents) is a collection framework tool used by the US Military to help understand the civil environment.

[120] PMESII (**P**olitical, **M**ilitary, **E**conomic, **S**ocial, **I**nfrastructure, **I**nformation) is a collection framework used by the US Military to help understand the operating environment.

the DSF and give civ-mil teams a comprehensive tool with which to conduct stability missions.

Fostering Effective Civil-Military Integration

Mandating the use of an interagency stabilization framework like DSF would be a significant step in reducing the challenges facing civ-mil teams. Gaining a holistic understanding of the causes of instability in an area requires both civilian and military skill sets. For example, integrating intelligence and civil information not only identifies local spoilers, but also resiliencies – the processes, relationships, and institutions that enable a society to function and regulate itself peacefully. Once resiliencies are identified, they can be strengthened to negate destabilizing forces. The DSF was designed to bring together the best aspects of military planning and civilian analysis to develop an understanding of the complex operating environments in which civ-mil teams operate.

The effectiveness of this approach can be seen in Helmand, Afghanistan. In the summer of 2009 the Marine Corps moved into Nawa District. Trained in DSF, taking a population-centric approach, and supported by a small team of USG civilians, the Marines worked closely with Afghanistan Government officials and community leaders to stabilize the area. Every patrol was told to build relationships with locals, listen to their concerns, and take visible action to address priority community grievances. In addition to living with and partnering with the Afghan National Police, the Marines initiated a comprehensive vetting and training program to ameliorate police corruption, a priority grievance of the population. In a matter of months the security situation improved to such an extent the Marines no longer wore their personal protective equipment in the

crowded bazaar area. This combination of identifying local sources on instability, working with the population to mitigate them, building local capability and capacity, and creating a base line to measure effect led to stability in Nawa.

Overcoming the Challenges with the DSF

To be effective, civ-mil teams must be able to synchronize and prioritize effort across agencies. However, bureaucratic stovepipes—different agency objectives and timelines--make integration difficult. Because DSF is an interagency framework which focuses on instability, it helps break down bureaucratic stovepipes and fosters effective civ-mil collaboration. This is facilitated by the DSF's emphasis on the creation of "Stability Working Groups (SWG)."

SWGs should include representatives from the different actors working in an area: DoD, USAID, DoS, USDA etc. Each brings unique perspectives on the environment, different capabilities and capacities to address sources of instability, and knowledge of ongoing programs. When possible, representatives from the host nation and local stakeholders such as civil society organizations, community groups, NGO's, or interested citizens should participate in SWGs. The SWG becomes a coordination mechanism and synchronizes efforts of the various actors operating in the area. In addition to gaining local perspectives regarding the sources of instability, inclusion of these diverse participants in the process facilitates the development and/or strengthening of community and governmental capability and capacity. This fosters long-term stability.

Since the DSF is focused on fostering stability, it emphasizes measuring the effectiveness of civ-mil activities. Military commanders and civilian program managers too often conflate output measures (the number of activities completed or dollars spent)

with impact (is "the area more stable?") For example, many implementers believe job creation programs stabilize an area because they assume gainfully employed men are less likely to join or support the spoilers who benefit from instability. Therefore, spending a lot of money on jobs programs is viewed as a "success." However the number of jobs created is an output measure which tells us nothing about the behavior of young men. A stability measure of effect would be a reduction in the number of men joining armed groups. Although it is much easier to track and report output, it has little to do with stability.

Implementing the DSF would help shift the focus to identifying and targeting local sources of instability. For example, project funds would not be allocated until a source of instability—and the desired end state—had been identified and confirmed through the DFS framework. In eastern Afghanistan, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) is using this approach. Before approving an activity, OTI requires the implementer to show how a proposed activity is tied to a source of instability. While this process is still relatively new, initial reports indicate the use of the DSF has slowed spending and improved the effectiveness of programming.

In summary, the DSF can diminish some of the key challenges facing civ-mil teams as they attempt to conduct effective, integrated, operations. It would help prevent expansive mission statements such as "build the capacity of provincial government" from leading to a plethora of projects in variety of areas, from agriculture to justice. Since these projects do not target SOIs, in many cases, they actually foster instability.[121] The

[121] Research in Afghanistan on the stabilization effects of hundreds of projects "found little evidence that aid projects are winning hearts and minds, reducing conflict and violence, or having other significant counterinsurgency benefits." See Wilder, "A 'weapons system' based on wishful thinking."

DSF combats this tendency through a standardized, tactically focused, interagency methodology which identifies local sources of instability, develops programming to mitigate them, and measures the effectiveness of the programs in stabilizing the area.

Fostering Civ-Mil Integration Across the Intervention Spectrum

Because it is focused on identifying and diminishing local sources of instability, the DSF can be used by civ-mil teams in a variety of environments and missions, from humanitarian assistance to conflict prevention. As an illustration, although the goals of humanitarian assistance--saving lives, alleviating suffering, and minimizing the economic costs of conflict, disasters, and displacement—are clear, identifying and prioritizing activities which will save lives and prevent further instability are not. Too often, assumptions are made regarding the types of perishable or nonperishable goods affected populations require. After the onset of an emergency, well-meaning international donors and NGOs often provide warehouses full of clothes and supplies when soap and jerry cans are the critical items required to stave off disease. Shipping in large quantities of the wrong supplies can do more harm than good by clogging airports and ports, thus delaying the provision of emergency supplies desperately needed to save lives.

Another common problem with the provision of humanitarian assistance involves the centralization of aid in easily assessable locations near large cities or major displacement camps. Affected populations in rural areas or more difficult to reach locations often receive only limited assistance. This encourages migrations of people in need to areas where assistance is being delivered. The devastating 2010 earthquake which struck Haiti illustrates this point. Humanitarian aid was largely concentrated in

Port-au-Prince leaving rural areas, only hours from the capital, in dire need.[122] Not only did this contribute to overcrowding as people sought relief in Port-au-Prince, it also overwhelmed the ability of the international community and host nation to respond. This limited the effectiveness of relief efforts and increased instability. Using an interagency stabilization framework based on the DSF could mitigate these problems. The DSF includes a simple survey tool to gather local perceptions. Systemically collecting local perceptions and including them in an analysis of where assistance should be provided would foster more effective responses.

The DSF can also be used as a conflict prevention tool. Traditional development programs seek to address traditional development challenges like poverty, social issues (i.e., education, health care), infrastructure, governance, etc. and monitor them according to standard metrics for that specific sector. These programs may have second-order effects on stability, but a stability analysis is not usually included in the planning process. For example, a microfinance program conducted in an unstable environment which does not seek to address drivers of conflict through its activities would be ineffective as it would foster instability. As every practitioner knows, instability is the biggest obstacle to sustainable development. In areas under the influence or control of spoilers, it is not uncommon for development contracts and resources to flow through their hands. This reinforces instability and undermines legitimate governance.

Although development programs have different objectives and metrics than stability-focused programs, using the DSF to identify civil vulnerabilities and potential

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[122] Craig and Marc Kielburger, "To Heal Haiti, Decentralize Aid and Relief," in *Take Part*, 2010. http://www.takepart.com/news/2011/01/12/to-heal-haiti-decentralize-aid-and-relief (accessed April 17, 2011).

sources of instability would foster sustainable development. For example, militant groups operating in northern Mali gain popular support because of popular disillusionment with the government.[123] The resulting instability limits the ability of development practitioners to work in the area. Understanding the specific reason for the disillusionment (grievances) of the people combined with knowledge of the means and motivations of the militants would lead to focused activities which could both decrease instability and foster long-term development.

Obstacles to DSF Implementation

Although developed by USAID, DSF training is far more prevalent at military training centers than within USAID and DoS training programs. Bureaucratic culture is one of the primary reasons why the military has taken the lead in using the DSF. In contrast to their civilian counterparts, DoD is generally more practically focused and seeks simple, but effective tactical tools. Civilian officials often take a longer view and generally operate at higher levels. As an illustration, with exceptions in Afghanistan and Iraq--and in contrast to their military counterparts, USAID and DoS officers do not usually work directly with communities in unstable areas. USAID typically implements programs through NGOs and for-profit development firms which are evaluated on the amount and rate they provide "deliverables" and spend money ("burn rates"), not the effectiveness of their program in stabilizing an area.

Bureaucratic culture also limits the military's use of DSF. Even though DoD has issued training guidance which states that "stability operations are a core U.S. military

[123] Heidi Vogt, "West Africa's Disenfranchised Groups a Potential Recruiting Target for Terrorists," in *Associated Press Worldstream*, June 13, 2007.

mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations" and that "Integrated civilian and military efforts are essential to the conduct of successful stability operations," implementation of this training directive varies by unit.[124] Without adequate civ-mil training for both civilian and military personnel, the success of civ-mil operations will continue to be the result of luck and/or ad hoc approaches.

Civilian entities face a similar challenge. Without leadership forcing the design and implementation of programs suited for unstable environments, program managers will continue to design top-down development programs based on sectors (health, education, infrastructure, agriculture, democracy and governance, etc.), not the flexible, cross-sectoral bottom-up stability programs required to target the sources of instability.

Conclusion

To stabilize failed or failing states, the U.S. has to identify and mitigate the conditions that foster instability. It needs to effectively integrate civil and military capabilities, define a common methodology to identify local sources of instability, devise and implement activities to diminish them, and measure their effectiveness in stabilizing the area. Without a common field-based methodology, the challenges noted above will continue to impede the USG's ability to create the conditions for lasting stability. Noteworthy, the challenge of integrating USG capabilities and capacities into effective civ-mil teams would be just as familiar to a District Advisor working in Vietnam in 1967

[124] Department of Defense, *Instruction Number 3000.05*, 16 September 2009. http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300005p.pdf (accessed April 17, 2011).

as it would to Field Program Officer at a PRT today. One author noted "many of the lessons learned in Vietnam were relearned in Iraq…"[125]

The USG has slowly started to alter its approach to weak and failing states. The military has created new doctrine (FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency; FM 3-07, Stability Operations) which provides an understanding of, and guidelines for, operating in these complex environments. On the civilian side USAID recently published guidance noting: "Stabilization is a different development assistance approach. While stability is a necessary precursor for our long-term development goals, stabilization programming often has different objectives, beneficiaries, modalities, and measurement tools than long-term development programming."[126] The challenge has been to take doctrine and guidance and turn it into practice. Mandating the use of the interagency District Stability Framework will help improve the effectiveness of civ-mil operations and improve the capability of the USG to diminish the causes of instability, from the Philippines to the Horn of Africa.

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[125] Robert J. Ruch, *Lessons on a Shelf* (U.S. Army War College, 2009) 1; for a historical comparison of the Afghanistan PRTs and the Vietnam-era CORDS program, see Henry Nuzum, *Shades of CORDS in the Kush: The False Hope of 'Unity of Effort' in American Counterinsurgency* (Strategic Studies Institute, April 2010).

[126] USAID*, Administrator's Stabilization Guidance* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 2011).

CONCLUSION

American has a long and robust experience with irregular warfare. It is no stranger to insurgency or counterinsurgency. In fact America was born of insurgency and has remained engaged in such irregular endeavors for centuries. It may even be argued that America is as much shaped by irregular conflict, such as the Indian Wars or Vietnam, as it is from conventional wars, such as the Civil War or World War II.

However, America has had mixed results with irregular war. Before the modern age of irregular warfare, as identified with Mao's arrival, America had relative success in irregular war utilizing overwhelming military force to beat the adversary into submission. However, once modern insurgency emerged, with its notions of harnessing the adversary's strength and turning perceived strengths into weaknesses, America has since struggled. Once Mao demonstrated that a weaker side can emerge victorious, America soon thereafter lost in Vietnam and attempted to avoid large-scale overt counterinsurgency warfare thereafter. However, history eventually pulled the U.S. back into large irregular war following September 11th, and the U.S. entered Iraq and Afghanistan in large scale soon to be confronted with large number of insurgents. America responded after years of floundering in both countries, rewriting and re-evaluating the entire approach to counterinsurgency. However, still the conclusion of both Iraq and Afghanistan are in doubt despite the major shifts in approach. While Iraq seems to be winding down with only relatively minor violence still at play, Afghanistan's insurgency appears to still remain strong.

The rethinking of irregular warfare has pushed new thoughts in irregular war. One such emerging thought is that the U.S. needs to better understand how to actually perform counterinsurgency. Throughout America's history in counterinsurgency, methodology was ad hoc at best, and performed in stilted fashion by layers of individuals as they rotated in and out of theater. But new methodology demonstrated a new and better approach, summarizing "best practices" from history, and advocating that understanding of the local people and their grievances was paramount to achieving success in irregular war. This methodology argues that you must focus on the local levels, have a comprehensive approach to uncover "sources of instability," and that all organizations must synchronize for the sake of enhanced continuity and synchronization. Further, the emerging methodology has not only consequences for irregular warfare, but also transcends beyond conflicts, potentially assisting in humanitarian intervention and preconflict environments. In other words, this new methodology argues that it is in everyone's interest to understand and mitigate conflict before local conflicts become irregular war.

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